

THE HOTSPUR, September 1, 1956.

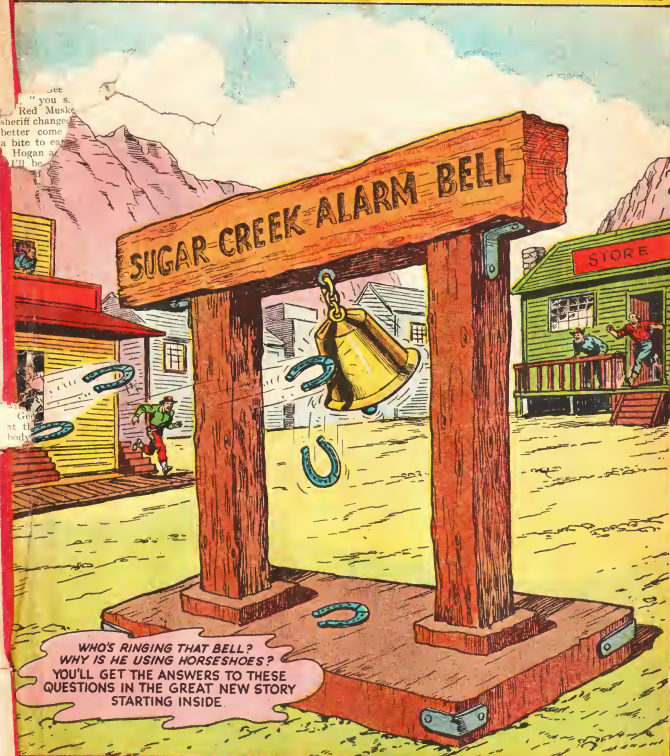
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THE HOTSPUR

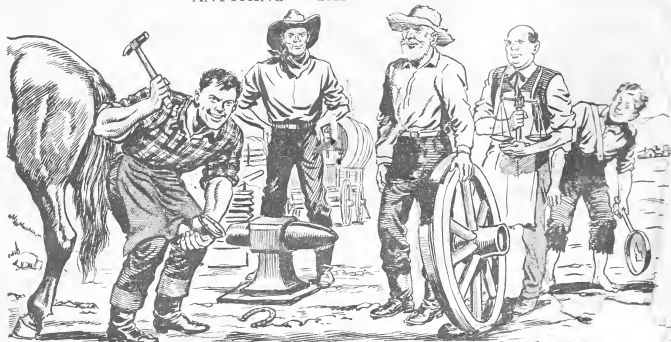
EVERY THURSDAY

No. 1034—SEPT. 1st, 1956.

PRICE 3d



MEET HORSE-SHOE HOGAN — THE WILD WEST BLACKSMITH WHO'LL FIX ANYTHING — BADMEN INCLUDED!



HORSE-SHOE HOGAN

The Tin-Can Let-Down.

THE dirt road wound through broken, rocky terrain where only greasewood scrub and cactus grew. Great rock mesas towered all round. It was a typical part of the real badlands of the Wild West.

A big covered wagon, pulled by six mules, was creaking along the trail. On the driving seat was Ben Hogan. He was over six feet tall, tanned a deep brown, and was dressed in a rough shirt and denim trousers. He had tremendously broad shoulders and muscular arms.

The wagon was his home and his workshop, for Horse-shoe Hogan was a travelling blacksmith, the best in the West.

On board, under the high hooped canvas tilt, were all the tools of his trade, including a portable forge. It was Horse-shoe Hogan's claim that he'd go anywhere, do anything—and do it better than any other blacksmith. Hogan was making for Sugar Creek, a small township on the edge of the badlands.

Uphill, downhill, on and on went the dusty trail. But at long last a pass through bare, red sandstone hills brought Hogan in sight of the lush green prairie beyond. At the bottom of the long slope was a cluster of buildings that straddled a fast-flowing stream—Sugar Creek.

Horse-shoe Hogan gathered the reins and clicked his tongue.

The Conestoga wagon creaked and ground its way downhill with Hogan setting the brake. Hogan's mules had been with him in his wanderings throughout the West. They'd hauled his outfit through Missouri, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona. Yes, and north to Nevada and Montana, too! Thousands of dusty miles lay behind them. For Hogan had travelled far and wide since setting up as a go-anywhere, do-anything blacksmith. Long Nose and Skate Head the leaders of the mule team were old and wise, tough and reliable.

Hogan studied Sugar Creek as he trundled towards the centre of the town. The heat was oppressive. Flies buzzed and dogs lay sleeping in the shade of the raised wooden boardwalks.

The town square, down by the creek, boasted a gigantic cottonwood tree, a drink-

ing well, and a wooden archway with a brass bell hanging in it. A wooden sign proclaimed it to be the "Sugar Creek Alarm Bell." Facing the square was the sheriff's office, the jailhouse and two or three saloons.

Squaring his enormous shoulders, Hogan reckoned it was time Sugar Creek acknowledged his arrival—or, at any rate, got to know about it.

Grimacing cheerfully, he drove right around the square. On the second circuit he reached down and took a polished horse-shoe from a rack beside the driving box. As he came level with the wooden archway where the town bell hung his wrist jerked. The iron shoe flew from his fingers, streaking through the air.

Clang! The voice of the town alarm bell was raised with a suddenness that startled everyone in earshot.

Hogan stopped three more horse-shoes at the bell. He hardly seemed to take aim when he threw, but not once did he miss, and the clanging of the bell was continuous.

Men, women, and children came running from all directions wondering what was wrong. The bell was only rung when something important happened in Sugar Creek—or an alarm was raised.

Hogan stepped down from the wagon.

"Howdy, folks!" he called. "Pardon me rousin' you, but I figured there might be a job or two needin' expert blacksmith attention." He moved across and picked up the horse-shoes he'd thrown at the bell. "I'll fix anything, folk! Now then, who's first?"

Before anyone could speak, the sheriff of Sugar Creek appeared on the scene. Sleepy-eyed, but with one hand on his gun, he approached Hogan.

"What in all tarnation do you mean creatin' that rumpus?" he demanded.

Hogan shaped for a soothing reply, then suddenly blinked. "Wal, dang my boot tops!" he exploded. "Josh Geering! Don't you remember me? How 'bout that time we took on a bunch of Apaches together?"

The sheriff goggled, then rubbed his eyes, and thrust out a gnarled hand.

"Great branded mavericks, if it ain't Hogan, the feller who's more deadly with a horse-shoe than he is with a Colt! What'll

you think, me? Haggin' on that way?"

Hogan brushed the question aside. "Gess I took you unawares, Josh. I s'pose you said 'Didn't expect to find you in the parts I aim to do a few jobs here before pushin' on for the Santa Maria Range.' Well, won't you object to me settin' up shop a little, will you?" he asked.

Sheriff Josh Geering couldn't say enough for Hogan. In no time at all Hogan's forge was going and Sugar Creek owed to the ring of mighty hammer blows at Hogan worked, shoeing horses and mending equipment.

Custom came the next day. The kids crowded round all day watching him.

"Don't you ever see a galloper?" one boy inquired.

Hogan shook his head. "Nevy thing," he said. "Besides, I'm a poor-did with a Colt. But with one of them—that's right. He held up one of the speck horse-shoes he always carried, the wagon driving box of the worn leather apron.

"Different ranges, get it? He expected 'Now this one's for a galloper,' he held up one shoe, "and this one's for just as fast as I can throw."

"Go on Horse-shoe, show us," the kids cried.

Hogan glanced round for a suitable target. He liked to amuse the kids. He saw a tin can sitting on a wall about forty-five paces distant.

"Here goes!" he said.

The polished horse-shoe whizzed and glinting in the sun as it flew through the air. There was a dull metallic thud. The tin can disappeared behind the wall.

The kids yelled delightedly. "See, master that was some throw."

Hogan was about to dust his hands when a bellow of rage reached his ears. He glanced round and was startled to see a man clattering over the wall where the tin-can had been a few moments earlier. Blue paint dripped off the man's hat and on to his shoulders. The can Hogan had used for a target had been full of paint!

The kids scattered hurriedly. Look on, Horse-shoe, it's Red Muckster comin' home.

He's a master marksman and he uses horse-shoes as bullets!

Hogan turned to face the angry, paint-spattered man. "Did I do that?" he asked. "I didn't know you were back o' that wall. Here, let me clean you down."

But Muskett wasn't in the mood for apologies. Riled as a rattler, he shook his fist under Hogan's nose, so angry he didn't seem to realise how big Hogan was. But when Muskett pulled his gun the blacksmith's face grew hard.

"Ain't polite to wave a gun at an unarmed man," Hogan said.

Muskett quivered with rage. "Are you gettin' out o' town pronto?" he demanded. "I'll count three! If you ain't hitchin' up by then it'll be too bad!"

Hogan rocked gently on his heels, a slow smile started on his rugged face.

"Two!" hawled Muskett.

Hogan reached out a large hand and calmly took the man's Colt.

"I reckon you and me don't see eye to eye on this," Horse-shoe said. "Time you went your way, mister." He calmly emptied the shells from Muskett's gun and gave it back.

Hogan was surprised to see a big crowd watching in awe silence. Muskett stormed off across the square, still shouting threats.

Sheriff Geering came up. "Horse-shoe," he said, "you shouldn't have done that, not to Red Muskett. He's poison." Then the sheriff changed the subject abruptly. "You'd better come over to my place and have a bite to eat."

Hogan accepted and turned to the crowd. "I'll be around again after grub," he announced. "Bring your broken tools. I'll mend 'em—or make you new ones! Nothin' too big or too small!"

When he and the sheriff were sitting in the law office with plates of beef steak and mugs of coffee in front of them, Josh Geering eyed his visitor gravely.

"What are your plans, Horse-shoe?" he inquired.

Hogan waved his knife. "I told you, Josh, I'm movin' on to do a special job at the Santa Maria Ranch."

"Uh-huh. Ever been there before? Know the boss?"

Hogan shook his head. "No. I jest had word they needed me. Seems there's a job no one else'll take on."

Josh Geering nodded slowly. "Mighty good to have that kind of reputation," he admitted, "but I ain't happy about it—not after you and Muskett clashing."

Hogan frowned. "What's he got to do with it?"

Geering said, "So happens he's foreman at the Santa Maria. He's hated by everybody for miles around, but Jim Collins, the owner—it's a horse-breeding outfit by the way—can't get rid of him. There are folks who claim he's scared of Muskett."

"When I go to the Santa Maria, I'll be doin' a job for Collins, not Muskett." Hogan shrugged.

Geering wagged his head. "You jest watch your step, that's all, feller."

Hogan straightened up from the table. "Thanks for the tip, Josh," he drawled.

The sheriff leaned forward. "Er—there's one small job you might do for me before you leave," he said.

Hogan laughed. "Anythin', Josh! Name it!"

A little shamefacedly the sheriff unfasted his badge. "This darned pin keeps bustin'," he complained. "Maybe you can fix it for me, huh? Makes a lawman look kinda soft when his star falls off in the middle of arrestin' some galoot!"

"That's A Killer!"

THAT day Horse-shoe Hogan fixed a lot of things from the sheriff's star to a wagon axle.

But in the morning the time had come for Hogan to move on. He was curious to know what kind of job awaited him at the Santa Maria Ranch. He collected all his throwing

shoes, cleaned them carefully, and put them ready to hand on the rack alongside the driving seat.

With shouts of farewell ringing in his ears, he whipped up the mules and headed out of town.

Hogan pulled in at the Santa Maria Ranch around noon. He was met by Jim Collins, owner of the ranch. Hogan took a fancy to Collins right away. The rancher was tall, thin, and middle-aged. He wore a worried expression most of the time, but it vanished whenever he smiled. He and his wife made Hogan welcome in the big timber ranch-house. Collins' son, a boy of ten or eleven, spent his time admiring the blacksmith's wagon and mule team.

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NEXT THURSDAY

There was no sign of Red Muskett around the place, though the ranch boss a crew of a dozen men—including a resident blacksmith, a fact Hogan didn't miss.

After dinner Collins explained why he'd sent for Hogan.

"I have one particular horse that's worth a great deal of money," he said. "He's a pure palomino stallion, a real beauty. He's been ridden in his time, but he's never had shoes, and that's the trouble. There's a buyer waitin' for him, but it's no use."

"How so?" Hogan asked.

"Because the man who wants the horse refuses to buy unless he's shod and ready for saddle work," Collins spread his hands. "Red Muskett—he's my foreman, by the way—fixed the deal. Seems the buyer, whom I haven't met, is a friend o' his. But Muskett won't close the deal until I get the horse fitted out with shoes. I can't get it done, Hogan."

Horse-shoe Hogan was puzzled. What was the foreman trying to pull? Some kind of trick on his boss, perhaps?

"Why so much fuss about one particular buyer?" he asked. "If the boss is good, you'd sell him easily, shod or unshod."

Collins lowered his gaze. "Wal," he said slowly, "it's this way. You'll think me a fool, Hogan, but I never aimed to sell this horse at all. He's my finest animal, best breeding stock on the place. Never was a saddle horse and never will be, not a good one. You see, he's a killer. But for all that, he's the worth more to me than I'll ever get in cash on this deal Muskett fixed."

"Then why sell him?" Hogan demanded.

Again the look of worry came into Collins' face. He did not answer. Hogan went on. "Let's get it straight. You want me to shoe this horse of yours so Muskett can sell it in spite of the fact you ain't really willin' to sell?"

The rancher nodded. "That's the way Muskett wants it," he admitted. "That's the way it'll have to be, I guess."

Hogan's query was blunt. "Why stand for Muskett pushin' you around that way?" Hogan asked. "Who's the boss—you or him?"

Collins blinked unhappily. "I hate the man!" he muttered. "But he's got a bold over me, Hogan."

Hogan crossed his legs and sat back. "Better tell it," he said. "Maybe I can fix him for you—as well as the horse!"

Collins hesitated, but something in Hogan's expression gave him confidence. Once the ice was broken the story came out quickly.

"I haven't always been an honest man," Collins began. "At one time the law was after me. It was years ago, mind. I paid the price of justice and then lived a different life, going as straight as an arrow. But I have a past, understand?"

"No one around Sugar Creek knows about my past, if they found out I'd be finished here, ruined, Hogan. Maybe even hounded off as an outlaw. Folks are pretty queer when they find a man's got a past he's ashamed of."

Collins paused, frowning sadly. "Muskett came begging a job one day and recognised me from the past," he went on. "You can guess the rest. He had me where he wanted me, and it was Muskett that way ever since." Collins clenched his fists. "I'd give a lot to be rid of him, Hogan, but he's here for keeps."

He stopped and waited hopefully, eyes on Hogan. The blacksmith's reaction was disappointing.

"Too bad," was all Hogan said in a dry tone. About this killer borse of yours, Why can't you get it shod by anyone else? How 'bout your own smith?"

Collins shook his head. "He won't touch it," he said. "That boss—and I'm warning you—has already killed three men, two of them blacksmiths. There's not a smith in this job of the country would take on the job. That's why I sent for you, knowing your reputation."

Hogan chuckled. "Wal, that's being honest, anyway!" he said. "Sure I'll shoe him for you, but do you want him shod? Ain't there some way you can stand up to Muskett an' tell him to get out?"

"I wish there was!" Collins said.

"Maybe there is! Come on, let's go and see this horse o' yours!" Hogan rose from the table and turned to the door. Before he reached it someone else came in.

It was Red Muskett, balding and thick-set, with small pig eyes and heavy, unshaven jaw. He glared at Hogan.

"You again!" he mouthed. "I thought I—"

"Red, be sensible! Hogan's here to shoe the palomino!" There was a note of panic in Jim Collins' voice.

The foreman's eyes narrowed. "Is that so?" he said softly.

The three of them went outside to a pole

corral close to the house. In the corral was a horse, one of the finest Hogan had ever set eyes on, a pure bred palomino with a snow-white tail and mane, and creamy chestnut body. Hogan knew at a glance the horse was worth a fortune in any of the markets back East. He guessed why Muskett was so keen to sell it ready shod to his buyer. An unshod horse would be a mighty poor bargain, but if it was shod, and if the buyer did not know its reputation, then as far as price was concerned the sky was the limit for such a beautiful animal.

Collins' men were beginning to gather round the pole corral by now, eager to see what Hogan would do. Muskett wore a sly grin.

"Go ahead, Hogan," he jeered. "Or are you scared?"

Hogan's stare was calculating. "Why, no," he said. "I'll shoe him for you—on one condition."

Muskett gestured angrily. "Name your own price! The boss'll pay whatever you ask for the job."

"I wasn't thinking of money," Hogan replied. "I'll put shoes on the boss—if you ride him right afterwards!"

Muskett lost his grin. His cheeks paled. "What's the idea?" he demanded. "What do you aim to get by that? I want that horse shod! You'll be paid in cash for doing the job! Now get on with it!"

But Hogan shook his head. "It ain't cash I want," he said. "You heard my price, Muskett. Either you ride the animal when I'm done or I quit. You know there ain't another man in the West would shoe the horse if I back out."

Muskett swallowed. "I won't ride the brute!" he growled.

"Because you're yellow," Hogan's tone was cold. "You want the critter shod so you can sell it to some ignorant fool who doesn't know the danger. You'll sell it as a

saddle horse fit for use—and maybe it'll kill another man." Hogan shook his head.

"It's no good, Muskett. If you want that animal shod you'll have to prove he's safe. Do that and I'll take back all I've said."

Collins' men pressed closer, not missing a word, nodding and muttering among themselves. Suddenly one said, "Go on, Red, you can do it sure! Why hang back?"

Others joined in, urging the foreman to accept Hogan's bargain. The idea seemed to amuse them.

There was nothing for Muskett to do but agree. Pale and uneasy, he told Hogan to get on with the job, he'd ride the palomino afterwards.

No Nails Wanted.

HOGAN whistled quietly to himself as he started up his fire and waited for the men to rope the horse and bring it to him. When it arrived the palomino was wild-eyed and restive, behaving like a savage creature with a deep-rooted hatred of men.

"Throw him and rope his legs!" Hogan ordered the men who controlled the palomino. Collins seemed doubtful. "I don't think you'll ever do it, Hogan," he said. "Still, you have been warned, friend."

After a struggle the men got the horse in position. Then Hogan went forward and studied the animal's hoofs with an expert eye. He went about his business in a way all around the outer edge instead of having nail holes. That soon had his watchers gasping with admiration. For one thing, they'd never seen a smith shoe a "bad" horse so coolly and easily. But the thing that had them really guessing was the kind of shoes Hogan forged for the job. They were entirely different to the usual brand. They were thin and light and made with high lips of metal turned upwards all round the outer edge instead of having nail holes.

Muskett thrust closer to watch, suspicion mixed with his fear. "What kind of shoe's that?" he demanded curtly.

"The right shoe for the right job," Hogan answered simply. "I invented it myself."

"It's plumb unnatural!" Muskett growled. "And it won't work, either! No nails! How are you going to keep those things on its hooves?"

"Like this!" Hogan fitted a shoe, gently hammered up the lip all round and then clamped it firmly to the outside of the palomino's hoof. He looked at Muskett and Collins. "Try to get it off," he challenged.

Muskett plucked up enough courage to bend over the writhing animal and get his hands on the newly-fitted shoe. He couldn't move it.

"But why not ordinary shoes, Hogan?" Collins asked.

Hogan didn't reply, but went on with his work till he'd finished. Then he signed to the men who held the ropes and told them to let the palomino get to its feet.

With a lunge the animal stood up, rolling its reddened eyes and standing stiffly, ears flat, scared, all set to kick out.

"He'll do," Hogan said. "He's just a mite nervous yet, that's all. In a minute he'll be as quiet as a lamb—ready for Muskett to ride him."

Muskett glowered. "If you think I'm getting astride that critter, you're mistaken," he exploded. "He's killed three men already, and I don't aim to be the fourth!"

Hogan eyed him bleakly. "You're scared," he drawled softly. "I'm told he can be ridden. Still, if you—"

Muskett put his head down and charged the smith. Hogan sidestepped and swung out a hand. Muskett was brought up short as if a mule had kicked him. Hogan said, "Tame down, hombre. I won't hurt you none, not till you've ridden that hoss like you said you would."

Muskett was slaking with rage. Collins' men looked on. One or two sniggered, enjoying the foreman's discomfort. They were glad to see Muskett roughed up a little. He had too big an opinion of himself.

"Get a saddle on the animal," Hogan said. "Muskett's all set to keep his promise."

Saddled, the palomino was quieter than anyone expected.

"There 'yare, Muskett, he's all yours!" Hogan said.

Two men held the tether ropes. The horse stood rigid, its flanks quivering slightly. Muskett stepped closer. He wiped the sweat off his hands and took another step. Every eye was fixed on him as he put out a hand to grip the saddle-horn. At that moment the palomino made a slight movement. It was enough for Muskett. His nerve broke.

"I can't do it!" he mouthed, running towards the bunk-house.

For an instant there was stunned silence, then someone let out a guffaw of laughter. It grew to a gale of mirth as the men jeered at Muskett's cowardice.

Hogan turned to Collins. "Looks to me like you'll be needin' a new foreman," he murmured. "I don't fancy Muskett'll stick around after this." Without a word he went to the palomino's side. Before anyone could protest, Hogan was up in the saddle, holding the reins and talking quietly to the animal. The laughter died as the men stared in open-mouthed amazement.

After one or two restless plunges the palomino stood still. Hogan signed to the men to let go the tether ropes. With a gentle nudge from his unspurred boots he started the horse into a walk.

When Hogan dismounted he was almost deafened by the cheers of the ranch crew. Collins took him aside.

"Hogan," he said with a smile. "I have to thank you for a wonderful job—on Muskett. You'll be glad to know he's gone, vamoosed! I doubt if we'll ever see him again."

Hogan grinned. "Fine!" he said. "Now, then, why did that horse behave so well when you rode him?" Collins asked.

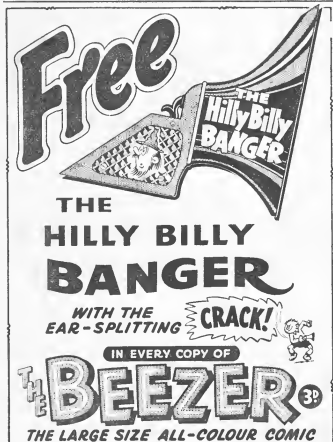
"That's really my secret," Hogan told him. "But you have a right to know, I guess. Firstly, mister, hear me out. Don't ever sell him as a saddle mount. He's got tender feet and without those special shoes I fitted no man could ride him long. I only fitted 'em because I had to make Muskett look what he is—a coward. The horse didn't try to throw me because those shoes don't hurt him."

Collins was dumbfounded. "Tender feet?" he gasped.

"You ever examined his hooves?" Hogan said. "Due to some freak of nature that critter's hoof—the hard part—is so mighty thin it couldn't ever take a nail!" Hogan put out a large hand. "So long, Collins," he said. "I have to be on my way."

A few minutes later the Conestoga wagon rolled slowly off, on the endless trail that follows the sun. The horse-shod Hogan was off again on his travels.

NEXT THURSDAY—There are horse-shoes flying when Hogan takes the warpath against a tribe of bloodthirsty Red Indians.



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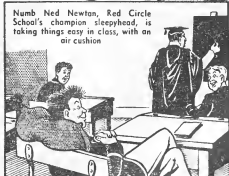
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NUMB NED'S DREAM CHAIR



Numb Ned Newton, Red Circle School's champion sleephead, is taking things easy in class, with an air cushion



Someone bursts the air pillow and wakes up everyone—including Numb Ned.



Mr Smugg, the Home House master, makes sure that Ned won't fall asleep again that afternoon



Ned is looking forward to a snooze in his favourite armchair. It's showing signs of the hard wear he's given it



Poor old Ned! His chair falls to bits and Ned lands on the floor amongst the wreckage



What's this? A super-duper armchair advertised in the news-paper and it's in Lington, the nearby town



Ned breaks all speed records to Lington. There's the chair—with built-in radio, reading lamp, fan, etc. AND IT'S GIVEN FREE!



There's bound to be a catch, and Ned finds it when he meets Mr Binks, who's offering the chair. The person who gets the chair has to sell things



Ned decides to have a go at winning the chair. The first thing he has to sell is a load of Wizzo hair cream



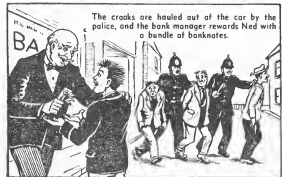
Outside the shop Ned walks into trouble. A gang of crooks are robbing the Lington bank



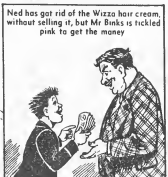
As the crooks pile into their getaway car, Ned goes into action, with bottles of Wizzo



The car, its tyres burst, gets out of control and crashes into a lamp standard



The crooks are hauled out of the car by the police, and the bank manager rewards Ned with a bundle of banknotes.



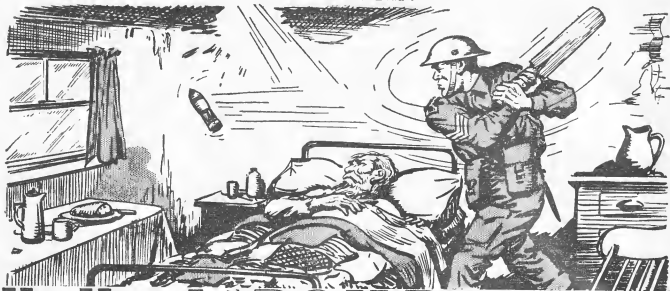
Ned has got rid of the Wizzo hair cream, without selling it, but Mr Binks is tickled pink to get the money



Ned has completed the first of his jobs. He has more to do before he can win the chair, but as a favour he gets to sit in it for five minutes!

NEXT THURSDAY—A RUNAWAY RAM KEEPS NED IN THE RUNNING FOR THE DREAM CHAIR!

A GREAT COMPLETE YARN ABOUT A CRICKETER WHO WENT TO WAR —WITH HIS BAT!



HE HIT A BOMB FOR SIX

Vincent's First Match.

THERE is a cricket ball mounted on a silver stand in the pavilion of the Westshire County Cricket Club. The name on the inscription reads, "Ray Vincent". With that ball Vincent played himself into the company of cricket's immortals.

I saw the game that the trophy commemorates. But Vincent's story really starts nearly twenty years ago, before the Second World War.

At that time Ray Vincent had lot long left school. Reports of his brilliant batting performances in junior games for Westshire began to come into my office. My name is Norton Leyland, and I'm a sports reporter.

It was news that another Vincent was turning out for Westshire. The family and the club had been linked together for nearly a century. During all that time there had nearly always been a Vincent in the county team.

There had been a gap for some years. Ray's father, the famous D. C. Vincent, was tragically killed in a car accident while Ray was only a baby. But now Ray was ready to take his place.

Ray was eighteen when he was picked to play for the county team for the first time. The game was against Millshire, who had won the County Championship the season before. It promised to be a hard-fought game, and I went along to report on it.

The Westshire ground at Westerton is a pleasant place. The town has spread along one side of it, but it is skirted on the other by the river.

On this occasion Westshire won the toss. The skipper was the famous "Pop" Parry—retired now—and he decided to bat. Pop himself opened the innings with Willie Sims, the senior professional.

Millshire took their cricket seriously. No dallying in the sun for them. Johnson, their fast bowler, opened the attack, and Pop Parry faced up to it.

The first ball was short, and the second kicked up viciously. It hit Pop in the ribs, and he went down. He waved away help, but that blow had obviously shaken him. He kept his wicket intact for the rest of the over, but he did not score.

Willie Sims faced Taggart, the Millshire spinner. The wicket was not taking much spin yet, but Willie played cautiously to begin with. He opened his scoring with a forcing stroke, and the batsmen ran two.

Johnson, the speed merchant, was warming up. When he came on again he was getting more pace than before off the pitch. Pop Parry tried to hook his first delivery, and missed completely. The second one whirled over Pop's head, and he ducked. The third had Pop's off stump out of the ground before he could move.

There was a thoughtful silence in the crowd as Pop trudged back. The skipper had been dismissed for a duck, with the score at 2. An encouraging shout greeted A. A. Robertson as he came out to take Pop's place.

Robertson was a stylish stroke player. But Johnson didn't give him a chance to settle down. His expresses hurled down, full of venom. Robertson snicked up the last ball of the over off the edge of the bat. There was a roar from the Millshire wicketkeeper as the catch landed in his gloves.

Tug Carter replaced Robertson. He had time to ponder on Westshire's tight spot while Willie Sims took the bowling.

Willie managed to collect a couple of 2's off Taggart's spinners. Warily, Tug Carter waited for Johnson to start his over.

Johnson's first delivery was a loose one. The crowd roared when Carter batted it away for a crisp 4. The next delivery seemed the same. Carter came out to it, changed his mind, and heard his stumps go crashing.

Westshire were 10 for three. At this critical moment Ray Vincent came out. He was a tall, well-built youngster, and he walked briskly to the wicket with no sign of nerves.

He took middle-and-leg guard, and had a quick look round. Then he was ready. Johnson pounded to the crease. The ball fizzed down.

Ray Vincent stepped across to it. There was a healthy crack as bat met ball. Out in the deep field a Millshire man started running, then stopped, watching the ball sail over his head. There was a roar from the crowd. Ray Vincent had scored a 6 off his first ball in top-class cricket!

Over The River.

THAT first clout was no fluke. Ray Vincent set about the bowling. The fast stuff that had ploughed through Westshire's opening batsmen had no terrors for him. The game came to life for the home team as Ray laid about him.

Willie Sims, the experienced old professional, was content to leave the scoring to the young newcomer. Willie kept his end up, scraping an odd run here and there, while

Ray set about breaking the bowlers' hearts.

The whole aspect of the game changed with that defiant partnership. The runs began to clatter up on the board.

Ray was seeing the ball right on to his bat. Some of his strokes lacked the polish that more experience would bring, but he was getting, the ball away every time. His 25 came up and the score went on mounting.

Johnson was pounding himself into the ground. He came off for a rest, but Irvine, the change bowler, could make no impression on the Westshire partnership.

Vincent made his 50 with a slashing stroke that hammered the ball against the pavilion rails. As the applause died away a voice in the crowd gave a shout.

"Over the river, Ray!"

Vincent grinned and waved his bat in acknowledgement. There was a chuckle from the crowd. Apparently there was a local joke about hitting a ball over the nearby river.

Johnson came on again, but Ray smacked him round the field. Another punishing stroke landed the ball over the crowd and against the fence that bordered the river.

"Nearly made it that time, Ray!" yelled the same voice.

Johnson steamed to the crease to hurl another one down. Ray, his score now 83, came out to meet it. He swung at the ball, punching it away again towards that fence that separated the ground from the river.

This time the ball did not rise so fast. A Millshire man hurled himself along the boundary. His clenching hand closed on the ball. He rolled over, but he still had the ball as he jumped up. Vincent was out.

The pavilion crowd rose to the youngster as he came in. His hard-hitting innings of 83 had pulled Westshire back into the game. Now, with a total of 127 for four, the home county had a fighting chance.

I made my way round to have a word with Ray Vincent. It seemed to me that a new personality was beginning to make his name in first-class cricket.

I found Ray taking off his pads in the dressing-room. He grinned quietly when I congratulated him.

"You looked set to stay all day," I remarked.

"I might have done, if I hadn't had another try to get a ball across the river," remarked Ray.

"What's the joke about that?" I asked.

"Well, it isn't exactly a joke," said Ray.

The batsman who sacrificed his life—to break a record!

"It's a sort of local legend. My family have always been connected with the club, and there's a story that my great-great-grandfather, Henry Vincent, once hit a ball clean across the river into the fields opposite."

"Some hit!" I exclaimed. "But I don't remember ever seeing anything about it in the records."

"That was before the days of official records," said Ray. "It must have happened about a hundred years ago. There was no county competition then, of course, but Henry Vincent played for the local club that used this ground, the forerunner of the present Westshire club."

"And you want to do the same as your great-great-grandfather?" I asked.

"That hit's a legend in our family," smiled Ray. "As I say, there's no official record of it, but the story's been handed down as a sort of tradition. My father was convinced it actually happened, and it was always his ambition to equal it. He died before he could do it, so now it's up to me."

He spoke lightly, but I could see the determination behind his quiet words. Equalling that century-old record meant a great deal to young Ray.

"What's the distance across the river?" I asked.

"One hundred and seventy yards," replied Ray.

"You're setting yourself a stiff task," I said. "The longest cricket hit ever recorded is one hundred and seventy-five yards—only five yards more than that, and one year after."

"Yes, I know," nodded Ray. He paused, then added, "But I'll do it one day!"

Fighting Cricketer.

IN Westshire's second innings against Millshire Ray scored a sparkling 70. But he didn't put a ball out of the ground across the river.

The match was drawn. Without Ray Westshire would have gone down. I made up my mind to keep an eye on young Vincent. It was my opinion that he was going to be news in the cricket world for a long time to come.

At the end of the game Ray was presented with his county cup. From then on he was a permanent member of the Westshire side. His hard-hitting style always drew the crowds, and every time Ray played at home he tried to punch a ball out of the ground and across the river.

He never succeeded. Several times he slammed a ball against the fence. Once, in the last game of his second season in first-class cricket, he got a shot over the fence, and it splashed into the water.

I was watching that game. After the match I had a few words with Ray.

"You nearly made it that time," I remarked.

"I'm getting closer," Ray grinned. "I'll do it next season."

But he was wrong. Ray made that hit into the river in the August of 1930. In September the war broke out. The following summer, when Ray should have been playing cricket, he was fighting his way back through France with the British Army, as the conquering German armoured divisions smashed towards the sea.

History will tell you that the British troops escaped destruction at Dunkirk and got away across the Channel to England. I was a war correspondent by then, and I went down to meet the survivors.

Among the battered, weary soldiers who came streaming back to safety I saw Ray Vincent. Like all the others, he was dirty, unshaven, and in a tattered uniform. All the men had lost their kit, but Ray was still clinging to one possession—a cricket bat!

He managed to raise a grin when he saw me. I looked in surprise at the bat.

"I took it with me when I joined up," explained Ray. "There was sometimes a chance of a game. I didn't intend to leave it behind. The Germans don't play cricket!"

The war took Ray to the Middle East, but

eventually his unit was brought back to England to prepare for the invasion of Europe. In June, 1944, the Allied Armies landed in France. Ray, now a sergeant, was with them.

The war correspondents followed the troops in. Around the bridgeheads our boys had established the enemy hit back hard. We pushed on deeper through the German defences, but the price was high.

A few days after the landings I was near a first-aid post, watching our wounded being brought back. Two orderlies passed me, carrying a stretcher. The man on it was heavily bandaged, and he was unconscious. Something on the stretcher caught my eye, and I went closer. The man had one hand outside the blankets. Although he was unconscious, his fingers were clenched round a rubber-covered handle. It was the handle of a cricket bat. Only a jagged piece of wood still remained attached to the handle. The rest of the bat had been blown away.

Later I pieced together the story of what had happened to Ray Vincent. Part of it I got from the official citation, when Ray was

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Ace Reporter

recommended for the award of the Military Medal. The rest was told to me by his pals who were with him at the time.

Ray and his unit were up with the spearhead of the British advance. They fought their way through the French farmlands, driving the enemy in front of them.

After several days of hard fighting they reached a damaged farmhouse. To their surprise, they found the French family still there.

The farmer greeted the British troops joyfully. Ray could speak a little French, and the farmer explained that he and his wife had refused to move because his wife's old father lay seriously ill in bed.

Ray tried to persuade the farmer to move back into the British lines, but the Frenchman took him in to see the old invalid in bed. Ray could see that the man was dangerously ill, and that any attempt to move him might make him worse.

"All right," nodded Ray. "We'll try to give you what protection we can."

The farmer had hidden some food from the retreating Germans, and his wife bustled about getting a meal for the British soldiers. While they were waiting Ray started to chat to the old man in bed in an attempt to cheer him up.

The old Frenchman was puzzled by the cricket bat thrust through the straps of Ray's pack. He seemed to think it was some sort of secret weapon.

Then one of the soldiers outside gave a warning shout. Ray heard the roar of engines. A German plane was diving down out of the clouds.

The German Air Force had been almost

driven from the skies over France. All they could accomplish now were occasional hit-and-run raids. Their wild attacks did little damage. They would plunge at the nearest thing in sight as they came out of the clouds, then scuttle back for cover. This plane was aiming for the farmhouse.

Ray heard the chatter of guns, and bullets ripped across the courtyard. The plane snarled overhead, and there was a crash on the roof.

Ray looked up. Something came twisting through the ceiling. That brief glimpse told Ray what it was—a small explosive incendiary bomb, dropping on to the bed of the sick old man.

Ray still had his bat in his hand. He swung hard in one of those punishing strokes that had once set the Westshire crowd yelling.

He hit the bomb and slammed it away towards the window. As the bomb hurtled through the air it exploded.

The other soldiers, running in, found Ray lying at the foot of the bed. They stamped out the fire that the incendiary had started, and bent over Ray. He was unconscious and badly wounded. One hand was clamped round the handle of his shattered bat.

Vincent Won't Quit.

TWELVE months later, when the war ended, Ray Vincent was still in hospital in England. I went to see him as soon as I could. I expected to find him very much changed. He was lucky to be alive at all.

He was sitting up in a wheelchair when I got there. His face was scarred, and he looked thin and pale, but he was practising strokes with a new bat he held!

"We'll soon see you back on the field," I joked.

"The doctors tell me I'll never play again," said Ray quietly.

I didn't know what to say to that. Ray gave a faint smile.

"I'm going to prove them wrong!" he said. He paused, then he added, "I haven't clouted a ball across the river yet!"

There was no doubt about Ray's determination. As soon as he was discharged from hospital he was back at the Westshire ground. County cricket was just starting up again after the war, and I went along to Westerton to see what progress they were making down there.

Practising in the nets was Ray. As I walked across I saw him facing an easy one from Willie Sims. Ray poked at it, missed, and staggered. His face was grey, and he leaned on his bat to steady himself.

A. A. Robertson had taken Pop Parry's place as captain. He was watching Ray. Then he glanced at me and shook his head.

"The doctors warned Ray he would never be completely fit again," he muttered, "but he insists on trying."

"Let's have another one, Willie!" called Ray.

Willie, who had given up active playing, but was now the Westshire coach, lobbed down another soft one. Ray got his bat in the way and smothered it awkwardly. He swayed for a moment, then began to walk away from the wicket.

"I think that's enough for the day," he muttered.

In the following summer sport was slowly struggling back to normal. Westshire had got together a strong team, and they began to climb the championship table. Going down to cover one of the boring, carefree hitting points of arriving a day early. As I expected, I found Ray in the nets.

He still looked thin and pale, but he was battling with more confidence now. I saw him hitting a fast over from Robertson. But there was something hard and grim about his style. The old spinning, carefree hitting had gone. I realised that it was will-power that was keeping Ray at the wicket. He was forcing himself to bat.

"Am I ready for a place in the team yet, Skip?" he called to Robertson.

"Give yourself a bit more time, Ray," hedged Robertson. "You'll be back."

After the practice, Ray walked across and spoke to me. I noticed how drawn his face looked.

"Are you sure you're not overdoing it, Ray?" I asked. "The doctors told you to take it easy."

"I'll take it easy when I've done what I want to do," answered Ray. "Robby and the rest of the boys think I'll never get back into top-flight cricket again. That's what you think, too, isn't it?"

"You were badly injured, Ray—" I began.

"I'll be back!" interrupted Ray. "You'll see I'll get a place in the first team again!"

The season went by, and Ray did not get the place he was fighting for. Robertson and the rest of the Westshire selectors knew what Ray would not admit. He was no longer strong enough to stand up to grueling three-day matches.

Westshire had found younger men to take Ray's place. The crowd climbed to the top of the table. Their last home game of the season was against Ardshire, who were racing them neck-and-neck for championship honours. It looked like being the match of the year, and I went along to report on it.

I got into the pavilion early, but I found Ray Vincent sitting there. He was in whites, and I looked at him in surprise.

"Are you playing, Ray?" I asked.

"I'm not picked," he said, "but I always change, just in case."

The ground began to fill up. A. A. Robertson hurried packing worried.

Travers and Bennett haven't shown up yet," he remarked.

Travers and Bennett were two of the promising youngsters in the Westshire side. They were still serving in the Army in Germany, but they had arranged to fly home for the match.

Shortly before the start Robertson appeared again. He had a cable flimsy in his hand.

"I've just had this cable," he said. "Travers and Bennett are held up. Their plane had to land at Paris with engine trouble."

"You'll have to play me, Skip," said Ray. "I'm in a jam," admitted Robertson.

"Hadley, the twelfth man, can fill one of the vacancies, but I'm still one short." He looked thoughtfully at Ray. "Are you sure you're up to it, Ray?"

"I'll manage," said Ray.

The Last Game.

THE news that Ray Vincent was playing again caused a stir in the crowd. Ardshire won the toss and elected to bat first. There was a special cheer for Ray as he went out to field for the Westshire team.

Ardshire opened well. By lunchtime they had lost only one wicket and scored 120. They might have lost another batsman, but Ray had fumbled a return. His old crispness in the field had gone.

Two wickets fell quickly after lunch, but Ardshire's fluency of fight in them. By the end of the day they had scored 217, and they had three wickets in hand.

There was rain in the night, and the drying pitch looked tricky the next morning. I had no chance to talk to Ray, but his face looked set as he walked out to field.

For the first time, Ardshire's wickets fell quickly. The pitch was getting worse all the time. Before lunch Westshire were ready to bat, with 230 runs on the board against them.

Half an hour later Robertson and two others were out, and the Westshire score was 17. It was almost the same position as when I had first seen Ray play before the war. But this time, Ray wasn't coming in to steady the tide. Robertson, uncertain of his ability, had put him down as last man.

On the treacherous wicket Ardshire romped through the home side's batting. An hour before close of play Westshire were 103 for nine. A shout went up as Ray came out to the wicket.

He took position, and a hush settled. The bowler spun down a slow one. Ray shaped to take it. There was a roar. Ray's middle stump was kicking out of the ground. He had been bowled first ball.

Ardshire started to bat 125 ahead. Before close of play they had lost one wicket and put on 12 runs. I watched Ray dragging his way off the pitch behind the rest of the fielders.

This time I caught him before he left the ground.

"You'll have to give up, Ray," I protested.

"I'm not giving in now," muttered Ray. There was nothing more I could do.

On the following morning I could tell by the expressions of Robertson and the rest of the Westshire team as they took the field that they were as worried about Ray as I was.

The wicket was still taking plenty of spin. Ardshire lost two more wickets for another 20 runs. Then their skipper declared. With first-innings points, the visitors were in a strong position. On a tricky wicket, Westshire had 158 to get to win. The championship was slipping out of their grasp.

Ray came off the field and slumped down on the players' bench. There was a greyness in his face. He leaned back and closed his eyes. He did not open them as Robertson went out with Tug Carter to open the innings.

Robertson played a captain's game. He went all out for runs. A drawn game was no good to Westshire. They had to win to make sure of the championship.

Robertson and Carter put on 45 before they were parted. Carter was caught at the wicket, and Hollis came out to join the skipper.

The hard fight went on. Ardshire were pulling out every trick to stay on top.

With an hour and a half left Westshire had lost eight wickets. Robertson was dismissed at scoring 60. The Westshire total was 102.

Ray was sitting up now. He had put his

pads on, and he had his bat between his knees. There was a yell from the crowd. Another Westshire wicket was spreadeagled. There was a tense silence as Ray walked slowly out. Westshire needed 56 to win. The only batsmen left were Ray and Hadley, the twelfth man.

Ray faced the bowling. The ball cut in. At the last moment Ray killed it.

It was the end of the over. At the other end Hadley crouched over his bat. He survived the over, but he did not attempt to score.

Ray had the bowling again. The field closed in, eager for the kill. As the ball kicked up Ray cut it away. His shout echoed across the field.

"Yes!"

Ray had skipped through a gap in the field. The batsmen ran two before it came back. There was a burst of applause.

Ray came out to the next one. There was something about his stroke that reminded me of the old Ray. Again the batsmen put on two. The field opened up. The kill wasn't going to be so easy after all.

Everybody round the ground seemed to have stopped breathing. Ray blocked the third ball. On the fourth delivery he pivoted and hooked it away to the boundary for a four. The pent-up excitement exploded in a roar.

Watching that last-wicket stand, I felt as if time had slipped back. Ray was hitting the ball like the carefree youngster I remembered. From somewhere he had summoned the strength to fight!

The score mounted. The hush had given way to an almost continuous roar of cheering. Desperately the visitors switched the changes on their bowlers. Ray hammered them all. At the other end Hadley gallantly kept his wicket intact.

Ray was playing like a man inspired. He had scored 47. Westshire needed 9 to win. I glanced at the clock. There was less than half an hour left.

Ray swung at another ball. He punched it through the covers and hit the railings. Another 4 went up. Five to win!

The Ardshire man tossed down the last ball over the over. Ray shaped for a slam, then tickled it away for a sneaky single. He had the bowling again.

Ray took his stance, then seemed to sway. I grabbed my binoculars. I saw the wicket-keeper say something, but Ray motioned him away.

A sudden silence came down. In the deadly quiet the bowler pounded up to the crease. The ball hissed down. Ray strode to meet it. With all his strength he hit out.

The ball went soaring away. It skimmed over the boundary, still climbing. It rose over the fence that surrounded the ground. For a second there was no break in the silence. Then a voice yelled shrilly.

"It's over the river! He's hit it over the river!"

Ray turned and saw the 6 go up on the board that signalled victory for Westshire. Then he fell forward on the turf.

Ray Vincent died that night. I was with him just before the end. He was tired and completely worn out, but he managed a smile.

"I did it," he whispered. "I equalled Henry Vinnett's record."

Still smiling, he died. The doctor at his bedside looked across at me.

"I don't know how he kept going so long," he said. "Those war wounds had left him just a wreck of a man."

The cricket ball mounted in the Westshire pavilion is the one Ray Vincent hit across the river. The inscription tells of his feat. A dying man hit that ball one hundred and seventy yards to equal a family record.

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'TEC ON THE TRAIL

The Marks On The Wall.

JERRY JEFFORD arrived on the outskirts of Redrock, the small Arizona cattle town, well after dark.

He hid his car in a wooded ravine and walked to the edge of the town. There were very few lights to be seen, and from what Jefford knew of the place, most people would be sleeping.

Jefford, an F.B.I. agent or G-man, had been investigating a series of mysterious incidents which had recently occurred in the neighbourhood. On his way up from Bisbee, where Tom Carick, whose real name was Wolf Head, was now in the condemned cell, Jefford had had plenty of time to think things out. He had decided that the best way of proving that Carick was innocent of the murder of Curator Grainger of the Redrock museum was by finding the real killer. The murder had been the culmination of the incidents, all of which had been connected in some way with Cochise, the famous Apache chief.

These incidents, which had all helped to point out that Cochise had been blamed for a lot of atrocities for which he was not, in fact, responsible, had all looked like the work of the famous Indian chief's ghost.

But, Jefford, using all the latest scientific methods of detection, had discovered that they were the work of Tom Carick, a millionaire, who was actually the great-grandson of Cochise. He knew, too, that Carick was not responsible for the death of the museum curator.

Apart from his natural horror of seeing a man condemned to death for a crime he had not committed, Jefford wanted to help Carick because their great-grandfathers, Cochise and Tom Jefford, had been blood brothers.

The G-man's immediate destination on entering Redrock was the museum where Grainger had been killed by a tomahawk, thrown by someone who had been trying to steal the weapon. Jefford approached the museum from the back, and had no difficulty in forcing a window. The catch was old and primitive. A few moments later he was inside. He closed the window behind him and shone only a pencil of light to guide him.

He knew there was no caretaker on the premises, but he realised that if anyone, chancing to be out so late, saw a light in the closed building, the alarm would be raised.

Jefford went down the stairs to the base-

ment below, where the main Indian exhibits were on show.

It was from there that the tomahawk which had killed Grainger had been taken, along with two other war hatchets. The G-man remembered from a previous visit that the tomahawks had been hung high on the wall. The places where they had been were distinctly outlined by the fading of the paintwork. To get up to these tomahawks the killer would have had to stand on top of a nearby showcase, and it had occurred to the G-man that he would almost certainly have steadied himself with one hand on the wall while he lifted down the tomahawks. Jefford was after the fingerprints that should have been left on the wall.

It was not long before he found them. He switched on the electric light. He knew it would not be seen, since he was down in the cellar. Then the G-man opened the pack which he had been carrying on his back. It contained his fingerprint apparatus.

He set to work, dusting the prints until they stood out well, then he adjusted the light on the apparatus and took some photos. After that he jumped down. He was now fairly certain that he had the fingerprints of the real killer of Grainger.

Thoughtfully, he retraced his steps out of the museum and back to his car.

He set to work, dusting the prints until they stood out well, then he adjusted the light on the apparatus and took some photos. After that he jumped down. He was now fairly certain that he had the fingerprints of the real killer of Grainger.

An hour later he had an enlarged photo of the fingerprints of the killer. At Bisbee, he had had no difficulty in getting photos of Tom Carick's prints, for they had been taken soon after his arrival there. A quick glance was enough to tell Jefford that these were totally different prints.

He was not surprised at that.

But these fingerprints by themselves could not prove Carick innocent, for the prosecution had contended that if the millionaire had not carried out the murder himself, it had been done by someone in his pay.

The prints, however, would help Jefford to identify the real killer.

The G-man decided he could do no more at present. He made himself comfortable in the car and went to sleep.

Ravine Raid.

JEFFORD was awake early the next morning and climbed to the top of the ravine

and found a thicket from which he had a good view of the main street of Redrock. He lay with his field-glasses and watched the scene.

He saw Sheriff Eloy, the town's swollen-headed sheriff, strolling about with the added importance that the trial of Tom Carick had brought him. Eloy had claimed all the credit for that arrest.

At midday, the G-man headed back to his car. As he approached it, he stopped and his eyes narrowed. The door on one side was open—and he was certain that he had left it locked!

He approached cautiously, examining the ground, but it was too hard to show any tracks. He did not touch the car, but looked inside. Most of the stock of timed food, which he had brought with him, had gone.

His detective's instinct caused him to look at the area on the door-post where a hand would have been placed by anyone entering the car.

It was as he had expected. There was the imprint of a moist or sweaty hand, and the G-man knew it was not his.

He looked around, saw nothing and heard nothing. He got out his fingerprint outfit, dusted the prints and photographed them. He quickly developed the negative, and made a contact print. While it was still wet, he examined the print through a magnifying glass.

Jefford drew a deep breath. If there had been any doubt he would have enlarged the print, but there was no need. He could see at a glance that the new prints exactly matched those which he had found on the wall in the museum. They were the fingerprints of the man who had taken those tomahawks from the museum—the fingerprints of the curator's murderer.

"Where is he now?" thought Jefford. "Is his hiding place in this ravine? I find the ravine a good hiding place, and he could have been finding it a good hiding place, too."

The G-man drew his revolver from his shoulder holster and put off the safety catch.

Watching the ground for tracks, Jefford worked through the thicket.

Ahead of him someone grunted and leapt into view. Jerry Jefford jerked up his revolver, glimpsed a robed figure, then saw something flying through the air in his direction. He knew it was a tomahawk. He tried to duck, but there was no time.

Thud! He was struck a blow on the head and went down.

The tomahawk trip-up that saved a man's life

It was an hour later that he stirred and blinked about him. He was no longer at the edge of the thicket, but lying under a tree close to his car.

His head felt as though it was splitting, and when he fingered it he found a bump the size of an egg, but there was no blood.

He winced at he sat up, then saw that his revolver had been placed by his feet. A second later he saw the tomahawk. It was embedded in the tree above his head.

He lurched to his feet and looked about him. The man in the thicket had hurled this tomahawk at him with lightning speed. "But why," Jefford wondered, "did it not split my skull?"

Wrapping the haft in his handkerchief, the G-man wrenched the tomahawk out of the wood with an effort. The blade was as sharp as a razor.

He had not been hit with that, but by the blunt back of the tomahawk.

That could not have happened by accident. It needed extremely careful and skillful throwing to make that happen.

"He didn't intend to kill me!" reasoned Jefford. "He deliberately threw it only to knock me out, then he carried me here into the shade, leaving behind the tomahawk in the tree as a warning of what he might have done. Why does he behave like this?"

When his head had cleared somewhat, Jeffery Jefford picked up his revolver and made his way to where he had seen the man in the thicket. As he had expected, the man had gone, but most of the stolen food was still there.

Jefford hunted around for more clues to the identity of the mystery man, but found nothing. He took back a can of meat which had been opened and tested it for fingerprints. They proved to be the same as those on his car, the same, that is, as the ones at the museum—undoubtedly those of the killer!

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Escape Story.

NIGHT came. Jerry Jefford locked the car doors, before leaving the ravine and heading for the town.

There were still a number of people moving about and lights were on. In fact, there were far more people about and more signs of life than he had expected.

"What's all the excitement about?" he wondered.

As there was a saloon which was on the edge of the town he decided to creep up to that and try to find out the cause of the excitement.

Jefford used the mesquite on one side of the saloon as cover, and he was soon right beneath one of the windows, listening to the chatter inside. But everybody seemed to be talking at once, and he could not get the hang of what they were saying.

He lifted himself enough to look over the edge of the window, and saw that there were fully a dozen men at the bar, deep in an argument. Suddenly someone entered the door at the other end, and a man who was looking that way shouted:

"Here's the sheriff! He'll know the truth about it... Hiya, Eloy!"

Everyone turned, and the hubbub ceased as Sheriff Eloy and one of his deputies walked towards the bar. Eloy looked upset about something.

"It is true that Tom Carick's escaped from jail?" asked a tall, lanky man. "Someone at the telegraph office has been spreading the rumour, and—"

"Yes, it's true," growled the sheriff. "That's why I'm here, to ask all you men to keep your eyes skinned. I've got an idea he might head back here to try for another killing. I want every man to keep watch for him. Take no chances with him. Shoot him down if necessary. Remember, he's a condemned murderer."

"How did it happen, Sheriff?" another man demanded. "I thought they kept night and day watch on prisoners in the condemned cell."

"So they do," grunted Eloy. "I can't understand it myself. I had a phone message from Bisbee warning me. They didn't have time to say much, but it seems that Carick vanished from his cell when it was locked and guarded. Sounds screwy to me, but the fact remains that Carick, Wolf Head, or whatever you like to call him is at large again, and he's likely to carry out more killings."

"Perhaps he'll make for his ranch," suggested someone.

"If he does he'll be trapped, for it's being watched closely," the sheriff replied.

Jerry Jefford was breathing hard. Wolf Head had vanished mysteriously from a locked and guarded cell. He was the son of Bluebonnet, the great Indian illusionist, and Jefford had believed for some time that he had knowledge of some of the secrets of his father's magic. Was that how he had escaped from the condemned cell?

Sheriff Eloy left the saloon, and went on to another, no doubt to give the same warning. Jefford drew back under cover.

"Without doubt Carick will make for Rincon Peak!" Jerry Jefford decided. "He will know that his ranch is watched, but he'll find a way through the cordon."

One half of Rincon Peak formed part of Carick's ranch, and in the world, wooded country of which it consisted, the millionaire had formerly been in the habit of living in the manner of his ancestors.

The Empty Lodge.

EIGHT hours later, Jerry Jefford, after coming on foot from the spot where he had had to leave his car, climbed the boundary fence on to the mountain part of Carick's ranch.

As yet he had no definite plans, except that he wanted to contact Carick. Then suddenly the smell of wood smoke came to the G-man's nostrils, and he paused. He

could not see the smoke, but it must have come down wind from the north. He turned in that direction, and realised that he was following a stream.

Very cautiously, the G-man moved through the bushes, and finally parted some leafy branches. He was looking at an Indian encampment in a clearing.

There was a chief's lodge with a richly-embroidered buffalo hide over the doorway. There was a fire smouldering in the open air hearth made of flat stones. There also was a teah pole and a high framework on which food was kept beyond the reach of wild animals.

But there was nobody to be seen, no sign of life. Jefford supposed that Wolf Head was in the lodge, perhaps sleeping after his escape from the prison. Jerry Jefford wriggled into a position where he was well hidden, and settled down to wait for Carick's appearance.

An hour passed, and suddenly there was someone in the clearing, an Indian.

The man moved silently to the fire and replenished it with wood, then raised the buffalo skin over the door of the lodge and let the sun shine inside. Jerry Jefford saw that it was empty. There had been nobody there all the time.

For half an hour the Indian remained, tending the fire and airing the lodge, then he lowered the buffalo skin over the doorway and glided away to the east. Jefford began to understand.

"That Indian is expecting Wolf Head, but he has not yet arrived. Everything has been made ready for him."

On impulse, Jerry Jefford left his hiding place and went to the lodge. He lifted the buffalo skin and went inside. He had decided to wait there.

He looked at the bed. It was a pile of hides and embroidered Indian blankets. It looked comfortable. Jerry Jefford lay back on it to await the coming of the owner.

He had under-estimated his weariness. He had forgotten that he had spent all the previous night driving and climbing a mountain. Within five minutes he was sound asleep.

How long he slept he could not tell, for the lodge was in darkness when he awakened. He knew at once that he had been wakened by the sound of voices outside.

They were talking in the Apache tongue, and one of the voices was that of Wolf Head or Tom Carick.

"You have done well, White Ear," he was saying. "Everything is as I wished it to be. I had hoped to be here sooner, but the Pale-face police were too numerous. It took a long time to get through their cordon. But I am here. I am hungry and I am tired. I will eat the food you have prepared for me, but first I will change into the garments of my ancestors. These clothes I now wear are offensive to me."

"The clothes are ready for you in the lodge, great chief," said the other voice. "The food will be ready as soon as you are rightly dressed."

Before the G-man could get to his feet, the buffalo skin was thrown back and Tom Carick stepped inside.

He was wearing prison garb; he looked drawn and haggard; he was covered with dust and his footwear was in shreds, but at sight of the man rising from the bed he stiffened like a straightening spring, and his hand flew to his side for a weapon which was not there.

"Carick, it's me—Jefford!" the G-man said.

White Ear came running at the sound of the voice, his tomahawk ready. It was Carick who stopped him in the nick of time before he could throw the weapon.

"What is the meaning of this? Why are you here?" Carick asked harshly.

"I've come to help you," Jefford replied. "When I found this camp I knew you were expected, and I waited. I fell asleep."

Carick motioned for White Ear to go.

"I told you at the trial that I did not want your aid," he said. "I will clear my name in my own way."

"How?"

Tom Carick frowned.

"I had time to think when in that cell, and it seems to me that the killer must have been an Indian, one of my own people."

"I know that is true," Jefford told him. "Indeed, I know who the man is! I have all the proof the law requires, but I must also show that you did not employ him to do the killing. I need your help now to finish my investigations."

"What can I do?" asked Tom Carick, and he drew his hand wearily across his face.

"First of all get some food inside you. I also need a meal," Jefford told him.

Very soon they were sitting side by side, eating from the same ample bowl, while White Ear watched balefully from the background.

As Jefford had said, Carick was nearly all in. He almost fell asleep over his food. Only once did he speak of the subject they had been discussing.

"What are your clues about the real killer?" he asked.

"I have a full set of his fingerprints. I nearly had my hands on him yesterday," said Jerry Jefford. "Now get some sleep. Everything can wait."

Carick nodded and went into the lodge.

Jerry Jefford continued to sit there in the sun, closely watched by White Ear. Half an hour later another Indian appeared in the clearing, and he snatched for his knife when he saw Jefford. White Ear growled something and spoke in low tones. After that both of them watched Jefford.

The Lost Tomb.

It was nightfall before Tom Carick awakened, and by that time there were four silent Indians in the clearing, squatting in a half circle round the solitary white man.

Presently Carick emerged from the lodge. He was in the full regalia of an Apache chieftain. He had become Wolf Head, great grandson of Cochise, the greatest of all the Apache leaders.

He raised his hand in greeting to the four Indians, who sprang to their feet and came forward to meet him. They spoke so rapidly in their own language that it was difficult for Jefford to follow them, but he knew they were reporting on the movements of the police.

The hue-and-cry was up all over the country, and a big reward had been offered for Carick's recapture, dead or alive.

"I am in your hands," Wolf Head said to Jerry Jefford. "What is to be done?"

Jefford pointed up the slope, and beckoned to Wolf Head and the other Indians to follow.

"First, I will take you to the grave of Cochise," declared Jerry Jefford. "I discovered it by the aid of modern science."

"I and my people will always be grateful to you," Wolf Head murmured as they came to the ravine with its dry river bed. "The grave is here?"

"Yes, over there at the foot of that giant Saguaro cactus," Jefford told him. "Come, and I will show you."

Wolf Head almost ran to the spot. His eyes bristled with excitement. When presently Jefford knelt down close to the huge cactus and scraped away the ground to reveal a buried slab of stone, the Indian's breathing quickened, and he knelt down.

Jefford decided it was better to leave the Indians alone to open the grave. He walked away down the bed of the river, and when he had turned a bend he heard Wolf Head break into a wild chant, one of the Apache chants for the dead.

Jefford sat down on a rock to wait. For a long time the chanting went on. Then there was silence. Wolf Head joined him.

They returned in silence to the camp. "What next?" Wolf Head asked.

"We now go to the lonely camp of a kins-

man of yours," Jefford said. "Like you, he is a great-grandson of Cochise. But unlike you, he has never accepted the ways of the Paleface. He carries on a mad hatred and defiance of all white men."

"You mean Scar Foot?" Wolf Head cried.

"Yes, it is Scar Foot who is the killer!"

Jefford replied. "We will need all your Indian cleverness and magic to get through the cordon around here, but once out we will make for my car, and all our trails will be far from any likely watchers."

The Mad Indian.

JEFFORD and Carick came, after many hours, to a boulder-strewn river. They crossed by way of the boulders, and could see a low hill about four miles distant across the plain. That was Big Rock Hill, where Scar Foot lived.

As they moved forward, Wolf Head suddenly let out a yell of warning, and at the same time reached out with his tomahawk

Scar Foot staggered and went down. He lay there motionless.

"You needn't have done that. He would have recognised me in another moment," cried Jefford, as he scrambled up and made for the huddled figure.

"He looked like a madman. I doubt whether he would have recognised anyone," grunted Wolf Head.

Scar Foot was certainly a fearsome sight as he lay there with blood streaming from the wound in the side of his head. His face was daubed with war paint, and there were red feathers in his hair. He was still claspings the tomahawk, and in his belt there were several ugly looking knives. He must have dropped his bow behind the rocks.

Jefford staunches the blood as best he could, then carried the unconscious Indian back to the river and bathed his wound. The G-man tore a strip from his shirt and bandaged the wound tightly. It was all he



Jefford did not see the arrow that was fired at him, but Wolf Head spotted it and used an unusual method to save the G-man.

and tripped Jefford. The G-man stumbled and crashed to the dusty ground.

At that very moment, something whistled past the back of his neck. It was an arrow, and if Jefford had not been tripped it would have taken him through the throat.

Next moment Wolf Head was sprawling on the ground by his side.

"Keep down," he gasped. "It came from the rocks on the left."

"What the heck—" began the G-man, when a figure burst from the rocks and rushed towards them brandishing a tomahawk.

It was an Indian in full war-paint, tall, and no older than Jefford himself. Jefford hardly recognised Scar Foot, so contorted was the other's face with fury.

"Death to all Palefaces!" the man was yelling in his own tongue.

"Scar Foot!" shouted Jerry Jefford.

Even as he spoke a tomahawk whizzed past him and met the oncoming Indian with terrific force, catching him on the side of the head. Wolf Head had thrown from a prone position.

could do, although he knew that with a gash that size some stitches would be needed.

"We'd better get him to Campara," the G-man said. "That's the nearest town. Let's get him into the car."

"Wait!" urged Wolf Head. "You remember why we came here. It won't take long to check his fingerprints."

The G-man agreed. They carried the wounded man to the car and there Jefford linked the fingers of his right hand and pressed them on to a card to catch a glance through the magnifying glass was enough.

"We have our killer!" he said quietly. "The prints are identical. Scar Foot killed the museum curator in Redrock."

Wolf Head looked grimly at the still figure. "And he is a great-grandson of Cochise—like myself!" he rasped. "He has brought disgrace upon the tribe."

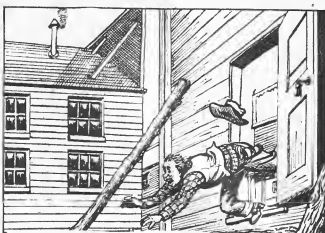
With a look of disgust on his face, Wolf Head got into the back of the car beside the injured man and helped to support him. As an afterthought, Jefford went back and

The sheriff of Whiteville is in a spin — someone's pinched his jail!

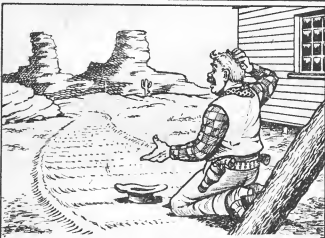
HOPPY the HOBO



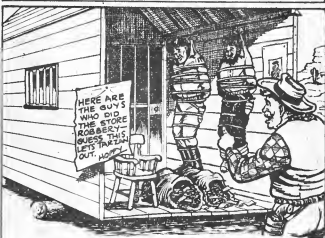
1—Hoppy Hughes, a young hobo from Arizona, befriended by the Chickmo Indians, had taken steps during the night to get his pal, Tarzan, a mule, out of jail. The mule had been framed on a robbery charge, and had been arrested by the sheriff of Whiteville. Sheriff Baines went to open the jail early the next morning. There was a big surprise in store for the lawman—Hoppy and the Chickmos had seen to that!



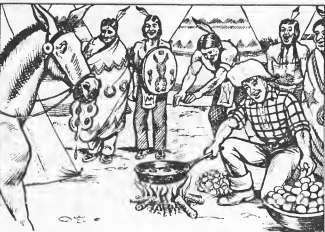
2—The Chickmos were a tribe of Red Indians who'd adopted Tarzan as their idol. The tribe's rascally medicine man, however, had bribed two outlaws to incriminate Tarzan in a robbery they'd done at a Whiteville store. But Hoppy and his Indian pals had captured the crooks, and then they'd taken steps to free Tarzan. The sheriff got a shock when he discovered the jail had disappeared.



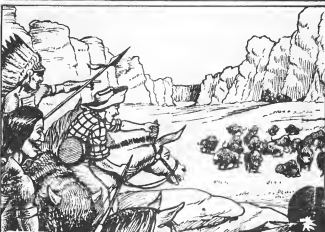
3—The sheriff landed with a thud in the space where the jail should have been. For several moments he blinked around in astonishment, and then the sight of a trail, which led from the jail site into the prairie beyond, explained everything. Like most buildings in Western townships, the jail had a false front. Someone had "disconnected" the main building from the false front and dragged it away!



4—Tarzan had been the only prisoner in the jail, and the sheriff soon put two and two together. "Them doggone Chickmo Indians must have pinched my jail!" he roared, springing to his feet. The irate lawman followed the tell-tale trail and eventually found the jail abandoned in the prairie. Tarzan had gone, but the jail was now occupied by the two outlaws Hoppy had captured. The hobo had left a note.



5—Sheriff Baines read the note and then glared at the outlaws. "Well, I'll be horsewhipped," he exclaimed, "if it ain't Slim Munro and Squirt McGinn. I've been tryin' to get you guys for ages!" The lawman chuckled. "I guess I won't make any trouble for them Injuns. I've got my jail back and two desperadoes into the bargain!" At the Indian village later that day, the Chickmos held a feast to celebrate.



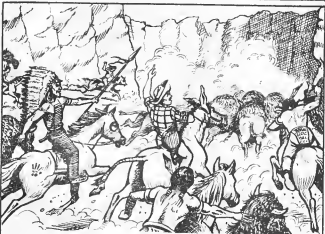
6—As a special treat, Hoppy fried a panful of eggs for Tarzan. The mule was daft about eggs, and, when he took a mouthful of the grub, he looked exactly like the tribal totem! This was why the Indians had originally adopted the mule. They believed that Tarzan was their totem come to life. The next day White Eagle, the Chickmo chief, took the pals along on a hunt for buffaloes!



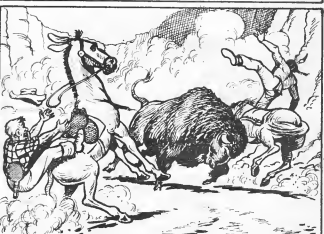
7—A Chickmo brave had seen a herd of buffalo in a nearby valley, and soon the hunters were on a hill overlooking the spot. The Indians had taken care to keep upwind so that the buffalos wouldn't scent them. Quickly the Chickmos draped buffalo hides over themselves. "This is an Indian hunting trick," White Eagle explained to Hoppy. "We are going to ride down on the herd—disguised as buffalos!"



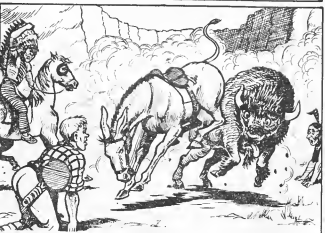
8—Hoppy followed the Indians down the side of the valley. Soon the herd was only about fifty yards away. At close quarters the buffalos were huge, and their horns glistened, razor sharp, in the sun. The slightest mistake would put the hunters in deadly peril. But the hobo didn't have time to think about the danger, for White Eagle suddenly flung aside his hide and charged the herd, his spear levelled!



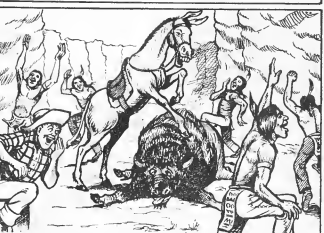
9—Uttering wild whoops, the Indians followed their chief's example and galloped after the herd. Instantly, the buffalos took fright and began to stampe. The air became filled with a thunderous roar. The ground shook, and a tremendous cloud of dust rose from a thousand hoofs. Hoppy threw aside his buffalo hide and took up the chase of the herd as the Chickmos headed it into a gulch.



10—The buffalos milled around in confusion in the narrow confines of the gulch. But the Chickmos' yells of triumph soon changed to cries of fright. A huge figure loomed out of the dust. It was the leader of the buffalo herd. The crafty animal had quickly realised the danger in the gulch, and had doubled back to fight a way through the hunters. Hoppy was flung from the saddle as Tarzan avoided the buffalo.



11—The buffalo saw Hoppy fall, and it turned to attack him. Things looked black for Hoppy until, suddenly, Tarzan came to the rescue! The mule rushed between his pal and the charging buffalo, wheeled round, and lashed out with his powerful hind legs. There was a resounding crack as the sledge-hammer kick found its target. The buffalo was stopped dead, and it crumpled in a heap, out to the world!



12—The Chickmos had wheeled away from the buffalo's rush. Now they dashed back, whooping with glee. Their idol had proved himself a great warrior and hunter! With Hoppy joining in the fun, the Redskins did a dance of triumph round Tarzan. The mule wasn't particularly bothered about all the fuss. He was thinking of the big helping of ham and eggs that he would get when he got back to the village!

NEXT THURSDAY—THERE ARE FIREWORKS WHEN A BAND OF INDIANS AMBUSH TARZAN.

The President with the magic touch

THE GREAT ALFREDO



Peso Creek.

THE Great Alfredo was peering at a large map hanging on the wall of his room. It was a map of Patana, the small Central American state of which he had become President.

"What's the name of this place I've got to visit?" he inquired.

With him was Pancho, the burly character who had appointed himself the President's bodyguard. Pancho wasn't particularly brainy, but he was as strong as an ox and very handy with a gun, and he never allowed Alf to go anywhere without him.

"It is *Peso Creek*, *Senor President*," stated Pancho, jabbing his stubby thumb at a spot on the map. "Here, in the south of the country. It is a boom town which has sprung up because of the silver mines there."

Pancho rubbed his chin dubiously.

"It is not a good place for the *Senor President* to go," he added. "It is a wild and lawless spot and there has been much trouble there. But the authorities think that a visit from the President would help uphold law and order."

Alfredo was rather an unusual sort of President even for Patana, where revolutions happened with clockwork regularity.

His real name was Alf Higgins and he was a stage magician by profession. He had been touring Central America and had arrived in Patana flat broke just at the time when an election for a new President was taking place.

Nobody was more astonished than Alf when the citizens, delighted at the show he had given at the local theatre, had elected him President by public acclaim.

There were drawbacks to the job, owing to the numerous unsavory characters who wanted to bump off the President, but it included three square meals a day, so Alf couldn't grumble.

"O.K.," said Alf. "When do we start? What time's the train to *Peso Creek*?"

"There is no train," said Pancho apologetically. "The line was blown up last week by bandits."

"Sounds as if the guys around those parts play rough," muttered Alf.

"Most of the trouble is caused by the gamblers," explained Pancho. "They swindle the miners out of their hard-earned wages. The biggest gambling joint is run by a man named *Mex Mola*, who practically runs the town."

"Well, let's hope he's got a bit of respect for his President," said Alf.

Alf set out for *Peso Creek* early next day. He made the journey in the big motor caravan, which he used for transporting his

stage props. He travelled unofficially and took no guards with him, except for Pancho.

It was rough going most of the way, over hilly tracks and through jungle, and they finally reached *Peso Creek* late in the afternoon. It was a sprawling mining town of iron-roofed, timber buildings.

The most striking thing about it was the number of gambling saloons in the main street. The biggest of them was one with the name "*Mex Mola's Joint*" painted over the entrance.

Alf parked his motor caravan at the back of the town's only hotel and climbed out.

"Let's take a look round," he said to Pancho.

He strolled along the main street, followed by Pancho. Alf was wearing his usual top hat and tails, but *Peso Creek* was full of odd characters wearing a wide variety of dress, so he didn't attract any particular attention.

They came to *Mex Mola's saloon* and Alf noticed that the place was full of gamblers. The flashiest of them was a swarthy man with a big moustache. It was *Mex Mola* in person. He was sitting at a table with two other men.

"How about a nice long drink of lime-juice," said Alf to Pancho, as they leaned on the counter. "I've got a throat like blotting paper after that journey."

He pulled out his wallet, which was bulging with notes. Most of the night was bulging with stage money, but nobody else realised that. *Mex Mola's* eyes glistened. He jumped up and strode over to Alf.

"Welcome to *Peso Creek*, *Senor*," purred *Mex*, who had made up his mind that Alf must be some rich tourist. "Why not sit down and join us? Perhaps you would like to play a little game of cards?"

"Cards?" echoed Alf innocently. He realised that the gambler had taken him for a sucker and was out to fleece him. "Between you and me, mate, I don't believe in gambling."

"It is just for a litle fun," urged *Mex*.

Alf grinned. Then he chuckled. Then he roared with laughter—much to *Mex's* surprise and indignation.

"You think I make the joke?" snapped *Mex*, turning red with anger. "Are you insulting me by refusing to play?"

"No," said Alf. "I'm all for it, my friend. This is going to be right up my street."

Card Sharpers.

MEX winked at his two pals as they sat at a table facing Alf. Pancho stood behind Alf, one hand on his gun, glowering warily.

At first the stakes were low and Alf won. *Mex* saw that it. It was the bait with which

he hoped to separate Alf from the wad of notes.

"It seems to be your lucky day, *Senor*," he smiled, as Alf scooped up his little pile of winnings. "Perhaps we should make the stakes a litle bigger, yes?"

"Anything you say, mate," agreed Alf amiably.

Mex gave his pals a meaning nod. This was where they went to work on Alf. The stakes piled up and *Mex* dealt the cards expertly, making sure he and his pals had high ones and Alf low ones.

But when they came to examine their cards they had a shock. They hadn't seen Alf make any suspicious move, and now it was they who had the low cards and Alf the high ones.

"I win, I think, gentlemen," beamed Alf, raking in the cash. "Funny, the way luck runs, isn't it?"

Mex scowled with inward rage. He couldn't figure out what had gone wrong. He dealt again, but the same thing happened. Alf won again.

Mex's face began to turn purple as the game went on. He was needed. The harder the gamblers cheated, the more Alf won. Soon *Mex* and his pals were nearly broke.

"Something screws up going on here," snarled *Mex*, as they looked up their cards for the last time. "Let's see what you guys have got."

"Two aces," snarled one of his pals.

"And I've got the aces," growled the other.

"I've got four aces," snapped Alf.

Mex leapt up with a howl of rage.

"There's only supposed to be four aces in the pack," he screeched. "Somebody's cheating!"

"I've had that going all along," agreed Alf good-humoredly. "If you ask me, gents, there are more than four aces in this pack."

He reached forward, flicked his fingers, and produced a card from under *Mex's* left ear, to *Mex's* amazement. Then he turned to *Mex's* pals and produced more cards from various parts of their heads and shoulders.

Finally he reached up and produced a whole stack of cards from the empty air. The cards cascaded from his hands to the table. They were all aces.

Mex and his pals goggled speechlessly. Then *Mex's* hand flew to his inside pocket. There was a murderous look in his eyes.

"Give all you with lead, you double-crosser!" he hissed.

Then a look of surprise came over his face. His hand came out of his pocket empty.

Alfredo does a card trick—and a bunch of gamblers cheat themselves!

Feverishly he began searching in his other pockets.

"Are you looking for this?" inquired Alf mildly, laying a small pistol on the table. "Er—you may as well have it back now that the game is over. I've removed all the bullets."

Mex spluttered and clenched his fists. "Beat the twister up and throw him out of here," he bellowed to his pals. "He can't make mugs of us—"

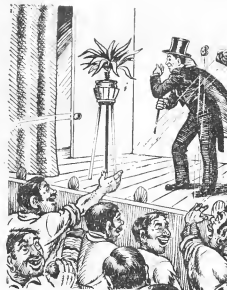
But Mex suddenly paused, for something jabbed him hard in the ribs. It was Pancho's gun. Pancho was holding it and grinning.

"You'd better not start any trouble, my friends," he advised, "or somebody may get punctured. You must behave properly in front of your superiors." He waved his gun at Alf. "This is His Excellency Alfredo the Great, our honoured President."

"President?" stuttered Mex, gaping at Alf pop-eyed. "What's the President doing in my joint?"

"I am here on a friendly visit," smiled Alf. "And I must say it was very kind of you to invite me to join in your little game. Collect up the winnings, Pancho."

Pancho did so.



The toughs in the audience

here quite a time. I've got a lot of work in front of me."

The Mayor began to perspire. He had heard about Alf's plan to close the gambling saloons.

"Would it not be wiser to go back to the capital and conduct your campaign from the safety of your palace, Excellency?" he suggested. "We have no wish to hurry you off, of course, but—er—"

"You don't want a dead President on your hands," grinned Alf. "Don't worry, I can look after myself."

That evening Alf started his campaign. The miners had finished work by that time and the gambling saloons were doing brisk business—all except Mex Mola's, which was temporarily closed owing to shortage of funds.

Alf, followed as usual by the ever-watchful Pancho, walked into a saloon run by a swartly half-breed named Red Rico.

"As you know, my friend, I am starting a campaign to close all gambling establishments down," Alf explained to the scowling Rico.

"But it is purely voluntary. You don't have to close if you don't want to."



"I don't intend to close," snarled Rico.

"Good!" exclaimed Alf, rubbing his hands. "Because as a matter of fact, I am in the mood for a little card game myself. I'll stay here and play with you."

Rico's jaw dropped. He had heard what had happened to Mex Mola's place when Alf had played cards.

On second thoughts, Senator President, I have decided to close down," mumbled Rico hastily. "For the time being, at any rate. You will have to go to some other place for your game."

Alf shrugged cheerfully and went along to the next gambling joint. But the proprietor of that one also hurriedly decided to put up his shutters rather than let Alf join in a game there.

Alf went on round the town. Soon all the gambling saloons were closed. All the owners felt it would be wiser to shut up shop for the night rather than have Alf clean them out of cash.

But, in the meantime, the angry Mex Mola had called a meeting of all the toughest characters in Peco Creek.

"We've got to get rid of Alfredo," he declared viciously. "We're not letting any slick-fingered President put us out of business. We've got to throw such a scare into him that he'll get out of Peco Creek fast and never come back again."

"How are we gonna do it?" growled Red Rico. "That gorilla Pancho follows the

President everywhere he goes—and Pancho is the sort of guy I'm not anxious to tangle with."

Mex sniggered. "I've got an idea," he explained.

A little later Mex and Rico and several other of the gambling racketeers called at the hotel, to which Alf had now returned.

"We have a favour to ask, Senator President," stated Mex. "As all the gambling places are now closed down, there is very little entertainment in the town. We wondered if you would care to put on a conjuring show for the miners at the local theatre tomorrow."

"Sure," said Alf readily. "If the customers are interested, I'll give them a show free."

Mex and his followers departed with satisfied grins after the arrangements had been made.

"We've got him where we want him now," muttered Mex. "As soon as he appears on the stage he's going to get the works. We'll bust up his act, wreck the theatre, and chase him out of town."

"It's dangerous," muttered Red Rico uneasily. "After all, he is the President. I don't want to end up in jail."



"Don't be a fool," grinned Mex. "We're not going to start any trouble ourselves. The front seats will be full of all the roughest, toughest miners in the town. They'll do the dirty work for us. We're paying them to do it."

The Theatre Riot.

THE Peco Creek theatre was packed the next evening. The front seats were full of tough, burly miners wearing grins of anticipation. Mex and his friends were at the back, comfortably out of range of trouble.

Alf appeared on the stage in his usual dramatic manner, popping up through a trap-door in a swirl of smoke. But instead of applause, boos and catcalls greeted him.

Alf could see right away that he was in for a hostile reception from the tough audience. But he went on with his act.

On the table in the centre of the stage was a small cabinet. Alf opened it to prove that it was empty, then gave it a tap with his wand, and began to produce strings of coloured flags, balloons, and bunches of flowers from it.

After which he threw a cloth over it. When he whipped the cloth away, the table and cabinet had vanished. Alf advanced to the footlights and bowed.

Then the trouble started. A rotten tomato whizzed through the air, just missing Alf's head. It was followed by other missiles. The miners jumped to their feet, booing and yelling.

No Gambling.

ALF took up his quarters in the best room in the hotel and a little later was visited by the Mayor and leading citizens of the town, who had now learned of his arrival.

"It is a great honour to receive a visit from President Alfredo," bleated the Mayor, a nervous-looking man. "But—er—no doubt your visit will be a brief one, Excellency?"

"I don't know," said Alf. "I may stay

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"Down with Alfredo! We don't want to see your rotten show! Get out of here!"

"One moment, my friends," boomed Alfredo, ducking as a cabbage hurtled over his head. "Allow me to finish the act."

There was a potted plant behind Alf on the stage, and he stepped back and tapped it with his stick. At once the flower-pot disappeared in a puff of smoke, and when it cleared Pancho had miraculously appeared, a gun in each hand.

The missiles abruptly stopped flying. There was a disconcerted silence. The miners sagged back into their seats sheepishly.

"Ah, this act has impressed you, I see," beamed Alfredo, bowing again. "Much as I appreciate your contributions of fruit and vegetables, I urge you not to direct any more at the stage in case you should hit Pancho. He is rather touchy about these things and—er—both his guns are loaded."

"Sure," grinned Pancho, and he shot out one of the footlights just to prove it.

After that there were no more interruptions for a while. Uncomfortably aware of Pancho's guns, the miners sat glowering in silence while Alf continued with his act.

Mex and the other gamblers in the back seats were scowling. "Don't worry," snarled Mex. "Alfredo won't get away with this. I've got one of the stage-hands working for me back-stage. He'll fix Pancho for us."

Meanwhile, Alf had dragged a big cabinet into the middle of the stage. It was his "vanishing" cabinet, which he had brought with him amongst his other props in the motor caravan.

"For my next trick, gentlemen—" he began, and then he paused as he heard a rumbling noise above his head.

The curtain suddenly came crashing down. It had been released by the stage-hand who was working for Mex. Alf managed to dodge clear in time, but it landed right on top of Pancho.

Pancho dropped his guns and let out a muffled howl as he vanished under the heavy folds of the curtain, which broke from its moorings and completely buried him.

"Now's your chance, you guys," hissed Mex gleefully to the toughs. "Rush the stage! Get Alfredo!"

The miners rose from their seats with wild whoops and charged on to the stage. Fortunately, Alf saw them coming. He dived into the "vanishing" cabinet and closed the door.

"Let's smash the door open!" bawled one of the miners, as they gathered round the cabinet. "Drag him out!"

They forced open the door of the cabinet. But it was empty. Alf had vanished through a trap-door in the bottom and was under the stage.

While the baffled miners were pulling the cabinet to pieces, trying to figure out where the magician had gone, Pancho managed to crawl out from under the curtain.

He was sizzling with rage and he had recovered one of his guns. Somebody would have been in for a rough time if there hadn't been a sudden flash and another swirl of smoke at that moment. Alfredo had popped up on the stage again. He brushed Pancho's gun aside.

"Hold it, Pancho!" boomed the magician. "No shooting! Even rebels must have a proper trial before they are shot!"

"Rebels? We're not rebels!" yelled one of the miners, taken aback. "We haven't even got guns. We only came here to wreck the joint and make a bit of trouble."

"How do I know you're not armed?" demanded Alf, and he stepped forward and ran his hands expertly over each miner's pockets.

"No weapons," he agreed. "However, an attack on the President is a serious matter. I still think I shall have to have you all shot as rebels."

"We're not rebels," howled the miner. "Mex Mola paid us to wreck your show, that's all."

"I cannot believe Mex would pay you to do a thing like that," said Alf, looking shocked.

"It's true. I can show you the money." The miner pulled a handful of notes out of his pocket and waved them under Alf's nose.

"Ah, just as I thought," said Alf. "You are trying to fool me. You know this is not real money, of course."

"Eh?" The miner's jaw dropped. "What do you mean, it's not real money? Sure it's real!"

He peered at the notes. Then an expression of consternation spread over his face. The money wasn't real! It was stage money!

"We've been double-crossed!" yelled the miner in fury. "This dough Mex paid us with is dud! Let me get my hands on the two-timing crook!"

A real riot started then. All the miners found that their money was dud. What they didn't know was that Alf had changed their real money for stage money when he had pretended to search them for arms.

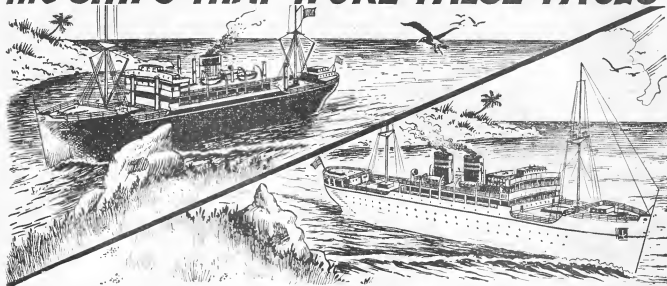
Mex and the other gamblers couldn't understand what all the trouble was about. But they didn't wait to inquire. Seeing the angry miners coming for them, they bolted. While the miners went round wrecking all the gambling joints, Mex and his pals skipped out of town and stayed out.

In fact, after President Alf's visit, Peso Creek became the most law-abiding town in Patana!

NEXT THURSDAY—A new presidential election is held in Patana and Alfredo goes all out to win votes—for one of his rivals!

COMPLETE STORY:— A DEEP-SEA DETECTIVE SEEKS A FLEET OF STOLEN SHIPS!

The SHIPS THAT WORE FALSE FACES



The Missing Ships.

A FEW days after he had brought the s.s. Condor safely to port, through the wildest Atlantic storm for years, Captain Thomas Jameson received the following cablegram from the owners—

"Request you come New York at once. Need special investigator. Dangerous proposition. Wire reply—John Somers, general manager, American Steam Transport Company."

Captain Jameson was a man who could never resist a challenge. His reply was both short and to the point. "Catching first train," he wired.

A few days later Captain Jameson was ushered into the presence of John Somers.

"Captain," the magnate said, "I am very glad you accepted my invitation to call here, and I very much hope that you'll accept my proposition."

Somers leaned back in his chair and placed his fingertips together and stared at Jameson.

"Tell me," he said, "did you ever hear of the s.s. Pittsburgh?"

Jameson nodded.

"One of our boats," he said. "She disappeared on the high seas nine months ago, and nothing has been seen or heard of her since. Is that correct?"

The other nodded.

"Maybe you'll remember the s.s. Kentucky, also?" he went on.

"She disappeared about six months ago, didn't she?" asked the skipper.

"Also the s.s. Tarpon?" went on the other.

"She disappeared about ten weeks ago," was the reply.

John Somers leaned forward.

"Anything peculiar strike you about the case of those three ships?" he asked.

"Well," said Jameson, "it's strange that all three ships should disappear in the same year, and—"

"Just so," nodded the other. "And each of them was engaged in the South American trade. Each, of them, as far as we know, disappeared in approximately the same longitude and latitude. It's also a strange coincidence that there should be an interval of about three months between each disappearance."

Captain Jameson's frown had deepened.

"What exactly do you suspect?" he asked.

"Nothing definite yet," said John Somers quietly. "But something which happened

quite recently may give us a lead.

"As you know, in each case, the crews disappeared with the ships. Well, a few weeks ago, down in the South American port of San Marliano an American sailor was found murdered. The papers in his possession showed him to be Jack Prest—and Jack Prest was a member of the Pittsburgh!"

Somers glared at Captain Jameson.

"Now," he demanded, "if the Pittsburgh disappeared with all hands, how did Prest come to be found in San Marliano?"

Jameson studied the ash on his cigar.

"Maybe the Pittsburgh was not lost at all," he said.

The other banged his fist upon the desk.

"That's what I think," he snapped. "Ships have mysteriously disappeared before today, and, later on, they had reappeared on the high seas, complete with structural alterations and under different names."

"I'm convinced that something of that kind has happened to the Pittsburgh and the other missing ships."

"But I'm still at a loss," Jameson said.

"Where exactly do you expect me to come into this business?"

John Somers regarded him steadily.

"Captain Jameson," he said, "I want you to become our special investigator. I want you to go to San Marliano and find out all you can about the murder of this man, Prest. I am convinced that the mystery of the Pittsburgh is somehow connected with that murder."

He handed over a typewritten sheet. It was headed—

"Mystery of the s.s. Pittsburgh."

Our readers will be interested to know that the American Steam Transport Company are not content to allow the disappearance of the Pittsburgh to become one of the unsolved mysteries of the seas.

It seems that recently they have come upon a clue, which is leading them to a different line of investigation. In connection with this clue, they have engaged the services of Captain Thomas Jameson as their special investigator.

The captain is at present on his way to San Marliano.

The skipper frowned, and then he read the typescript through again.

"What's behind all this?" he demanded.

"Just this," said John Somers quietly, "if you undertake this work I shall cause this paragraph to be published exactly as you see it here in all the San Marliano newspapers.

If, as I fancy, the men concerned in this mystery have their headquarters at San Marliano, they will become alerted at once. In all probability, Captain Jameson, they will lay themselves out to murder you as soon as you set foot on shore. That's why I told you my proposition was dangerous."

He spoke now with great distinctness.

"Don't you see," he said, "if these men attempt to murder you, and you're able to outwit them, you'll at once obtain a line on their identity."

He relit his cigar.

Jameson heaved his hefty frame up and adjusted his peaked cap.

"I reckon you can sign me on," he said.

Two days later Captain Jameson boarded a ship for San Marliano.

The K.O. Drink.

WHEN his ship arrived at San Marliano, Jameson made no attempt to disguise himself. He went down the gang-plank, carrying his small suitcase and attired in his usual double-breasted suit of navy blue, with his peaked cap clapped firmly on his head.

He strolled slowly along the quayside, and finally came out into the streets of San Marliano.

It appeared he was having trouble in lighting his pipe, for several times he stopped and applied a match to it. Each time he lit a match Jameson turned round as if to shield the flame from the wind, so that he was looking back the way he had come.

On each occasion he noticed a tall, comparatively well-dressed man who was strolling along behind him.

When Jameson entered the first hotel he came to, the tall man was not far behind him.

As the ship had docked early in the afternoon, the skipper decided to explore San Marliano that evening.

When he left the hotel he had effected several changes in his appearance. First of all, the suit he was wearing was very old and ill-fitting, while his peaked cap had given way to an old, battered felt hat.

Jameson made his way towards the docks, and he hadn't walked the length of three streets before he realised that his shadow was again behind him.

Moreover, the latter was rapidly overtaking him. Reaching Jameson, he touched him on the shoulder.

"Pardon me," he said, "but you're a Britisher, aren't you?"

The ship's bell that couldn't hold its tongue!

"Yes," said Jameson shortly. "I'm British all right. Name's Captain Tom Smith. I'm trying to get a job in this blinkin' hole."

"I'm English myself," said the other casually. "I've got a job ashore here. But I like to help a fellow countryman whenever I get the chance. You'd better come along with me to Pete's Saloon. Pete's is a kind of clubhouse for all the men in the coastal shipping services. If there's any jobs going you'll hear about them there. What d'you say?"

Jameson shrugged his shoulders.

"Pete's Saloon, it is," he answered.

Pete's proved to be a dirty-looking den in a very dingy side street. There was no doubt about it being popular with seafaring folk, however. The place was crowded with them.

The stranger piloted Jameson to a corner alcove, inside which were a table and a couple of chairs.

"What'll you drink?" he invited.

"Anything that's cool," Jameson said.

TEC ON THE TRAIL

(Continued from Page 11.)

retrieved Scar Foot's tomahawk. He tossed it on to the seat.

"If I'm not mistaken, that's one of those stolen from the museum in Redrock. It will be another piece of evidence," he said.

Then he drove towards Campara as fast as he could without needlessly hurting Scar Foot.

Final Justice.

IT was late afternoon when they arrived in the little town. Jefford drove straight to the sheriff's office.

"Don't disclose who you are," he told Wolf Head, as they stopped.

The sheriff himself came to the door to see what was happening, and stared at the two Indians, one heavily bandaged.

"What goes on here?" he asked, trying to recollect where he had seen Jefford before.

"We need a doctor," said the G-man.

"I've every reason to believe that the wounded man is the tomahawk killer of Redrock. He attacked me, and my guide threw his tomahawk at him just in time."

"Tom Carick—the escaped killer!" cried the sheriff, leaping down the step. "That's not him. Carick may have Indian blood, but he's not that colour."

"I didn't say it was Tom Carick, but the killer for whose crime Carick was found guilty!" snapped Jerry Jefford. "But if we stay here talking he'll be dead before the doctor arrives."

That galvanised the sheriff into activity. He rushed off for a doctor, and the others carried Scar Foot inside. He groaned when they set him down. The doctor came in haste. He inserted ten stitches, and by that time Scar Foot was recovering consciousness.

Motioning Wolf Head to silence, Jefford explained to the dazed sheriff about the investigations that he had carried out.

"I'm putting all the evidence in your hands, sheriff," he said. "Carick is innocent, and . . . wait, Scar Foot is coming round!"

The injured man's eyes were on him, and they were no longer glaring. The madness had gone out of them. There was recognition in them.

"Paleface, I spared your life in the ravine the other day because Head-Held-High was good to my great-grandfather," he croaked, using the name the Apaches had given Jefford's grandfather.

"But you got your best to kill me today," Jefford told him. "Don't you remember shooting arrows at me, and then rushing at me with a tomahawk?"

Scar Foot shook his head and raised his hand to his eyes.

"I do not remember anything when the madness is upon me, only that I hate all

The other nodded, crossing to the bar, and after a short time he returned with two tall glasses, one of which he placed in front of Jameson.

"Swig that over," he invited.

The captain made to pick up his glass, and then he suddenly stopped.

"Why," he exclaimed, "don't tell me that's old Ted Phillip, from Bristol?"

He leaned forward as if to obtain a better view of a man seated in a far corner. As he did so, he swept his companion's hat off the table.

"No," he said, shaking his head, "it's like him, but it isn't old Ted."

The other bent down to pick up his hat, and when he sat up again he saw Jameson in the act of draining the glass.

But the sailor hadn't tasted a drop. When the other had bent down he had swiftly poured the contents of his glass into the flower-pot standing on the table.

Jameson's well-dressed companion turned and began to talk about the men in the room.

Palefaces and would like to kill them," he replied.

"You killed the man at the museum in Redrock," accused Jefford sternly. "That was when the madness was upon me, but I am not sorry. I was only sorry that there was no time to scalp him!" growled Scar Foot. "Give me a tomahawk and I will die fighting!"

He lurched to his feet, but was so weak that he would have fallen if the sheriff and the doctor had not caught him. With the help of the others, they carried him to one of the cells and put him on a bed.

"It is loss of blood," said the doctor. "He'll be stronger in the morning, and in a month's time he'll be strong enough to stand trial."

The sheriff came out of the cell and turned to Jefford.

"I must get on the phone to Bisbee at once! They must make an announcement calling off the hunt for Tom Carick. I and all you others were witnesses to that confession, and then there are other proofs. An injustice has been done! There are orders out to shoot Carick on sight. They must be cancelled."

"Carick is in no danger," Jerry Jefford told him. "He's here beside you. This is Tom Carick, whose real name is Wolf Head. He has been helping me to prove his own innocence."

The sheriff of Campara was speechless when he discovered that it was the truth, and was too dazed to do anything until Wolf Head said in English:

"Go ahead with your phone call. Tell them I will remain here until someone comes to take me back to Bisbee to have my name cleared. Perhaps you, my good friend, will come with me?"

Jerry Jefford nodded.

The following day an announcement of Wolf Head's innocence was made in all newspapers and on the radio throughout the country.

The following day, too, when the State police came to transport Scar Foot to Bisbee for trial, they found that he was dead. During the night he had secretly taken poison. His proud spirit would not submit to captivity.

To avoid publicity, Wolf Head retired to the Indian reservation with the rest of his people, and there he later transferred his big fortune, which he intended using to improve the condition of the Apaches. For the rest of his life he would be able to live amongst his people, a great leader, as Cochise had been in his day.

And there, six months later, at a ceremony attended by every member of the tribe, Jerry Jefford was made a blood brother of Wolf Head, just as Tom Jefford had been made a blood brother of Cochise.

NEXT THURSDAY — A smashing new boxing series starts. Make sure you get a ringside seat. Read more about it on the next page.

He went on talking, and at first Jameson made grunted answers and nodded his head in agreement. Gradually, however, he seemed to be falling asleep.

He made to rise to his feet, but instead, he slumped forward across the table.

His companion jumped to the curtains, and drew them so that the rest of the room was cut off.

Then he rapped sharply upon the table.

Instantly a sliding door in the wall at the back of the alcove slid open, and a very fat, very dirty-looking man appeared.

"A very well-dressed man," he said, "he caught hold of Jameson's inert form and lugged the captain through the secret door."

There followed a journey in some kind of motor vehicle, and then once again Jameson was lifted up. He was carried up a gang-plank on to a ship.

Firstly he was flung into a bunk.

Silence followed, and when Jameson opened his eyes he found himself lying in one of the bunks of a ship's fo'c'sle. He had only been pretending to be drugged.

Suddenly the engines began to thump, and the ship began to move.

Climbing out of the bunk he listened, but the forward part of the ship seemed to be deserted.

It was towards the fo'c'sle bell that Jameson made his way, for he knew that the name of the ship would be written on it.

When he reached it, there was just sufficient light for him to make out the letters.

The name of the ship was indeed made the name of the s.s. Pittsburgh, the ship which had disappeared nine months ago!

Man Overboard.

THE lights from the docks illuminated the ship fairly well, and Jameson could see that the crew were all congregated at the rails. Looking across at one of the ship's boats, he read the name written on the side.

It was the s.s. Raltone.

But as far as Jameson was concerned, the mystery was solved. The ship he was standing on was actually the s.s. Pittsburgh!

"No wonder," he said to himself. "This is the Pittsburgh, all right. When they reconstructed her and altered her name they must have overlooked the fo'c'sle bell."

Once the ship was clear of the harbour she ran into heavy weather.

She had been to sea about an hour when one of the crew saw a figure going by him. Spinning on his heels, he obtained a glimpse of its face. It was the face of the man who had been lying unconscious in the fo'c'sle.

"Hi!" he yelled. "Stop him, somebody, stop him!"

He burst into a run, and at that moment the ship dipped steeply, and the crest of a huge wave came foaming aboard.

Then, as the wave passed, he obtained a glimpse of an indistinct shape standing on the rails. Next moment it had gone toppling overboard, and to his ears came the faint sound of a splash.

"Man overboard!" he hollered, racing to the rails. "Man overboard!"

There came a bellow from the bridge, and the ship shuddered violently as her engines were reversed to stop her.

The big figure of Captain Buck, the master of the ship, came leaping down from the bridge.

"No, was it?" he rapped.

The staring deck-hand pointed vaguely out to sea.

"That guy we shanghaied," he gasped. Captain Buck swung on his heels.

"Well," he snapped, "we've been saved a job. We were supposed to bump him off."

He pointed back to the bridge, and a minute later the s.s. Raltone was continuing on her voyage.

Meanwhile, Jameson had been creeping along the deck. The wily captain had deliberately raced past the deck-hand and attracted attention to himself. The wave had helped

his scheme, for the indistinct shape which had gone overboard had not been a man at all—it had been a bundle of ropes tied up in a blanket.

Making his way behind the bridge, Jameson came to an iron ladder. Climbing this, he found himself facing a door. He opened it, and stepped into a passage. The first door he came to had the one word, "Captain," written across it.

He had found the captain's cabin, and the next moment he was inside.

Back From The Dead.

HIS watch done, Captain Buck handed over the wheel to the mate, and made his way to his cabin.

He seated himself at the table, and, taking out what was obviously a kind of log-book, he began to write in it.

Behind him, the lid of a locker gradually lifted until it was wide open and resting against the wall. Out of the locker crept Captain Jameson.

Jameson coughed. Buck spun round in his chair. He stared as if he were looking at a ghost. Poised in his hand, Jameson held a gleaming knife he had taken off the cabin wall.

Buck gasped. "It—it was a trick! You—you didn't go overboard at all?"

Next moment Captain Buck had been thumped behind the ear.

Jameson tied and gagged his victim, lifted him into the locker, and closed the lid.

He proceeded to search the cabin, and in one corner he found something that made his eyes gleam. This was an ex-Army Tommy-gun—with a few magazines of bullets.

Shortly afterwards the door of the captain's cabin opened, and a figure clad in oilskins came out. The hat was pulled down well over his face, and the big collar was turned up.

So attired, Captain Jameson set out to explore the ship. In particular, he wanted to find the wireless cabin. Entering it, he saw that the operator was seated inside.

"Come out of it," snapped Jameson. "I want to send a message."

The operator looked puzzled.

"But—but you know nothing about wireless!" he cried. Then he stared wide-eyed.

"Why, you're not Captain Buck!" he gasped. "You're—"

Jameson's big fist took him on the point of the jaw, and he went down in a heap.

A few minutes later, Captain Jameson was seated in the operator's place sending out a message.

He spent nearly half an hour inside the wireless cabin, and at the end of that time he chuckled.

Leaving the operator bound and gagged, Jameson came out of the cabin and locked the door. Then he began to stroll back to the bridge.

Suddenly somebody let out a yell.

"Here he is, Cap'n!" came the shout.

"Here he is."

Instantly from the bridge sounded the bull-like roar of Captain Buck.

"Get him, men," he raved. "Make sure of him this time."

A bullet whizzed past Jameson's head. He realised what had happened. In some fashion Captain Buck must have escaped from the locker.

From underneath Jameson's oilskins came the Tommy-gun.

Ready to swing the weapon into action at a moment's notice, the special investigator came along the deck to not far from the wireless.

Here quite a number of the crew were waiting for him.

But before they could rush forward the Tommy-gun had swung into action, and a hail of bullets was whining over their heads.

Swinging the gun round, Jameson fired half a dozen shots at the bridge, and then he raced for the bows.

It was here, behind a big capstan, that he meant to make his stand. From this point

he could command the ship's deck.

All through the night, the deck was lit by quick gun flashes as Captain Buck and his crew made attempt after attempt to storm Jameson's position. Each time a stream of Tommy-gun bullets forced them back.

Then, far to the east, Captain Jameson saw the sky begin to lighten. Dawn was breaking.

Then his eyes narrowed, for, coming along the deck was a queer-shaped object. As it drew nearer, Jameson saw it was a great square of sheet metal. It must have been pushed along by men hiding behind it.

Jameson turned his Tommy-gun upon it. But the bullets failed to penetrate the metal. It still moved steadily forward.

WHAT'S THIS?



A BOXER WITH A MONOCLE!

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He wears a morning coat and a top hat and is billed as the Earl of Pimlico!

With that build-up you'd think that Derek Britt was a dude!

HE IS — BUT HE'S

THE DYNAMITE DUDE

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Jameson saw something else then. Behind the metal a long, snake-like object was moving. It was a hosepipe!

A booming voice reached him from the bridge.

"You with the gun," it yelled. "We're giving you a last chance to surrender."

"I'll see you sink first," bawled back Jameson.

But he realised that against a powerful jet of water he would be helpless. Already the men behind the steel plate were close.

Then from the bridge came a roar—"Let 'er go!"

Next moment a jet of steaming water came over the top of the iron plate, and descended in a cascade upon the capstan behind which Jameson had taken cover.

The shanghaied skipper had not guessed that Buck would use hot water. He leapt for the rails. For one moment the crew of the Pittsburgh saw him against the dawn sky, and then he had gone overboard.

Captain Buck belloyed his satisfaction. A cheer went up from the crew. They were still chortling among themselves when a few moments later, a brilliant beam of white light suddenly appeared in front of the ship

Slowly it swung back towards them, and then it focused directly upon the ship.

Next moment a shell came screaming overhead, to splash into the sea in front of the bows.

The astounded crew, from the captain downwards, gaped. They were suddenly silent as ghosts as they saw the long, grey shape of a cruiser.

Quarter of an hour later an American naval lieutenant had boarded the ship.

"We received a wireless message from a man on board this ship," the lieutenant snapped. "A Captain Jameson. He declared that he had been shanghaied, and that he was being taken out to sea in order to be drowned. He told us that he had obtained proof that this ship is really the s.s. Pittsburgh—a ship which mysteriously disappeared about nine months ago. Where is Captain Jameson?"

"Captain Buck laughed.

"I never heard such nonsense," he snapped. "There's no Cap'n Jameson aboard this ship. This vessel is the s.s. Raltone. No wireless message has been sent to you from this ship. Some practical joker has been pulling your leg. Why he should pick on this ship, I don't know."

"That's where you make a mistake," said a voice behind them. "You see, Captain Jameson happens to be aboard."

Buck swung round.

"You thought I had gone overboard?" Jameson chuckled. "Well, so I did. But before I went overboard I was careful to tie a rope round my waist. When the cruiser made you heave to, I climbed back on board."

The American sailors took command of the ship, and for the next half hour Captain Buck was cross-examined by the Naval lieutenant and Jameson.

He admitted that the Raltone was really the s.s. Pittsburgh, which he explained, had been originally manned by a gang of crooks. During her last voyage they had run her to a small island off the coast of South America. There her name had been erased and that of Raltone substituted. She had been entirely repainted and her superstructure altered.

The same crew had gradually obtained berths aboard the s.s. Kentucky, which had also been taken to the island and converted into the s.s. Argentina.

Then the crooks had been absorbed upon the s.s. Tarpon, and the Tarpon, according to Captain Buck, was still at the island undergoing reconstruction.

Two days later the American cruiser nosed into the almost land-locked harbour of a certain small island off the coast of South America.

She arrived in the dead of night, and when dawn came the island was thrown into a panic. In a small dockyard lay the missing Tarpon. Her superstructure was already a mass of ruin, and already the name s.s. Pampas had been inscribed on her stern.

When the cruiser left the island she took with her as prisoners the whole population.

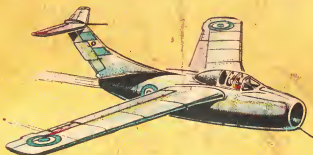
Immediately her wireless became busy. A few hours later, the agents of a certain shipping company in San Marino were placed under arrest.

At the trial it was discovered that these men had made quite a business of reconstructing stolen ships. It also came out that the seaman, Jack Prest, had been murdered because he had threatened to talk.

When the whole case was cleared up, Captain Jameson reported back to John Somers. He was offered an important executive's job on shore, but when the s.s. Condon left port again, the stalwart Captain Jameson was on the bridge in his usual place.

NEXT THURSDAY — You'll meet a great character, The Wolfpack! You'll have read about him on page 3. Let your pals in on this terrific new story, too!

The COLOURS of the WORLD'S AIR FORCES

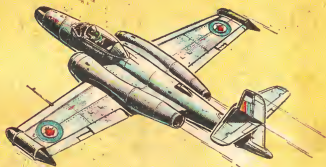


ARGENTINE

The aircraft shown here is the I.A.33 Pulqui II, the first Latin American swept wing jet fighter. The Arrow, as it is called, made its first flight in June 1950. It is powered by a Rolls-Royce Nene 2 turbo jet engine in the rear fuselage and has a maximum speed of 646 m.p.h. at 16,400 ft. The Pulqui has pilot armour, bullet-resistant windscreen and carries four 20 mm cannon. The wing span is 34 ft. 9 in. and length 38 ft. The tricycle undercarriage has brakes on all three wheels, and the Arrow's maximum ceiling is 49,530 ft.

CANADA

This is the CF-100 Mark 4, a two-seat, long-range, all-weather fighter. On December 18, 1952, the CF-100 exceeded the speed of sound in a dive, the first straight-wing combat aircraft to do so. The crew sit in tandem, the pilot in front of the navigator/radio-operator, and both have Martin-Baker ejection seats. Two Orenda Mark II axial-flow turbo-jet engines supply the power. Weight loaded is 37,000 lb. approximately, and the operational range is over 1,150 miles. Wing span 53 ft. 7 in., length 54 ft. 2 in., height 15 ft. 6.4 in.



MERCHANT FLEETS OF THE SEVEN SEAS



CANADIAN PACIFIC

While the Canadian Pacific Railway was throwing its lines across Canada in the 1880's, it was decided to create an ocean link to feed the railway from the East. Sailing ships were chartered and the first one, with a main cargo of tea, reached Port Moody, near Vancouver, three weeks after the first train crossed Canada. This was in 1886, but the company did not get its own ships built for the Orient Pacific route until 1890, when the first of the now famous Empress liners appeared.

The three white Empresses, of India, China and Japan, were the first twin-screw vessels on the Pacific. When the Empress of India ran her trials in 1891, the company's red and white checkered flag was unfurled for the first time.

To feed the other end of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Atlantic end, the Company built the Empress of Britain and the Empress of Ireland, to start the Atlantic fleet. The Company now has over 80 ships.

The Empress of Britain, shown here, is the third of that name. The first one was launched at Govan in 1905. The second, launched at Clydebank in 1930, was used as a troopship in World War II. She was torpedoed in 1940. The present Empress of Britain is of 26,000 tons gross and has twin-screw geared turbines. She is 640 ft. long by 85 ft. beam by 48 ft. draught and can do 20 knots. Launched by Her Majesty the Queen in 1955, she is designed to sail right up the St. Lawrence to Quebec and Montreal.

